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The Advent

O Lord, Thou hast decided to test the quality of our faith and to pass our sincerity on Thy touchstone. Grant that we come out greater and purer from the ordeal.

* *

Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them.

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The ADVENT

February 1952

CONTENTS

		Page
EDITORIAL:	—*Nolini Kanta Gupta*	
SECOND SIGHT		... 5
THE MOTHER ON HERSELF		... 8
EARLY POEMS	—*Sri Aurobindo*	... 10
LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO	—*Sri Aurobindo*	... 12
BHAGAVAD GITA (A Translation)	—*Sri Aurobindo*	... 16
PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS (II)	—*Sri Aurobindo*	... 19
THE MYSTERY OF LOVE	—*Sri Aurobindo*	... 26
THE DIVINE COLLABORATORS	—*Rishabhchand*	... 33
THE MEETING OF THE EAST AND THE WEST IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY	—*S. K. Maitra*	... 39
THE DOCTRINE OF MAYA	—*Haridas Chaudhuri*	... 48
REVIEWS:		
(I)	—*Late C. C. Dutt*	... 54
(II)	—*R. N. Khanna*	... 58

Her high nude soul,
Stripped of the girdle of mortality,
Against fixed destiny and the grooves of law
Stood up in its sheer will a primal force.
Still like a statue on its pedestal,
Lone in the silence and to vastness bared,
Against midnight's dumb abysses piled in front
A columned shaft of fire and light she rose.

(From *Savitri*) SRI AUROBINDO

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THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIAL*

SECOND SIGHT

WE know that animals generally possess sharp senses to an extraordinary degree. They can hear and smell at a distance far beyond what is normal to the human sense. Give a kerchief used by a man to a dog, it will spot the man among a thousand. An elephant will take you straight to a place miles away where there is water, if you happen to be stranded in waterless surroundings. Where there is no question of sight or smell, even then the animals perceive things in a queer way: an elephant, again, for example, refusing to advance further upon road, because, as it was discovered later on, the road was hollow inside and would have sunk down had the animal walked upon it. There are other countless phenomena to prove the keenness and subtlety of the animal sense or *instinct*, as it is called.

Perception means contact with the object. Now, what is it that contacts? In ordinary sense-perception, the normal human sense-perception, for example, it is the physical vibration emanating from the object that contacts the physical organ: the distance at which the vibration can be received depending on the sensitivity of the recipient nerves. In man the sensitivity is

* Based on Mother's talks given in 1951

limited, in the animal it is highly intense. This is however, only one factor of the phenomenon. We will explain.

As it is well-known, there are three levels of consciousness: the physical, the vital and the mental; for the present we leave out of consideration the fourth or the spiritual (including the psychic). Not only so, in each level or plane all the others are also involved i.e., lie secreted. Thus, in the mind there is a vital mind and a physical mind, in the vital there is a mental vital and a physical vital. So, in the physical too there are these three grades: (1) physical physical, (2) vital physical and (3) mental physical.

We will now better understand the process of contact in sense perception. The purely material contact, physical vibration touching the physical nerves of the particular organ is an instance of the physical physical perception: the dog smelling or the elephant hearing at extraordinary distances. We have heard of men who, by putting their ear upon the ground, are able to catch sounds coming from a great distance and practically inaudible to others standing by. But there is another class where the material vibration is not at issue, it is the vital vibration in the physical touching the vital physical of the receiver. The elephant finding the water or sensing the hollow road is an instance in point. The mental physical, the last of the three is a kind of intuition in the physical, that is what is usually called 'instinct'. A cat, for example, put in a sack and banished miles away from its home will find its way back; a dog will go round the world almost and find and recognise its master even many years after (the first to recognise Ulysses was his dog). In man too the vital physical, more especially the mental physical not unoften finds room for play, although his physical physical i.e. purely material sensibility is extremely limited. This limitation of the physical sensibility in general, to whatever sphere it may belong, is due to the intellectual or rational bias that has developed in him. In the more unsophisticated races or types the sensibility is still maintained. Man can however, cultivate, consciously develop these faculties: it then becomes what is called a system of Yoga. A familiar example of the mental physical action as cultivated in man is offered by the water diviner or dowser, as he is called. But, as I have said, the normal effect of human rationality is to inhibit the spontaneous action of the senses as it is natural with the animal.

It is interesting to note that animals in the wild state maintain intact their instinctive capacity, their "second sight", but begin to lose it when they live with men, come under the influence of human mind and reason become "domesticated". A cow habituated to free grazing in the field

will never touch the poisonous grass, will always avoid it and take only the harmless and healthy variety; but kept within the stable, accustomed to a closed life, it loses its natural instinct, gets confused, does not know how to distinguish the right from the wrong food, being always given ready-made things by the master.

Human contact has thus a harmful effect upon the animal's instinctive life. But in another way it may have an uplifting influence too. Some of the refined human sentiments—sympathy, gratitude, faithfulness, self-sacrifice—in a pronounced human way find expression in animals that are domesticated and live close to man and within the human atmosphere. It is true many of these feelings are not totally absent in the animal kingdom (especially in the higher strata) in its natural or wild state, but they belong to the level of pure feeling or impulse and have not risen to the level of sentiments which have a mental element infused into their vital stuff. Indeed a strong mental element, a reasoning capacity sometimes very clearly develops in the domestic animal.

The animal acts by instinct, we say; that is to say, it goes straight to the thing to be done: in order to do a thing it does not make a choice between possibilities, there is no selective process in its consciousness. It is the human consciousness alone that says, this is not to be done, but that to be done, not this but that or puts the question, which one, to be or not to be? This is what we mean by discrimination or deliberation. Normally, this faculty is absent in the animal. We have said of refined feelings in man; "refined" here need not mean always ennobled or morally elevated; it may mean also more subtle, more complicated and be applied to some baser—acute perverse—feelings which are perhaps peculiarly human. Domestic animals sometimes contract them from men: jealousy, spitefulness, vengeance, vindictiveness of an extreme degree are likely to be found more among animals living with men than those that are in the wild state. We have heard of elephants brooding over a hurt or even an insult for long months and taking revenge when occasion presents itself. And we have heard of a cat jumping out of a window into the street below and killing itself simply because it thought its mistress showed more love towards another cat.

The humanising of animals living with men, through its good and bad effects, has an evolutionary value: that is to say, some animals in that way attain almost to a human status in their soul. And occultists state that souls do pass in this manner from the animal to the human incarnation.

0328

THE MOTHER ON HERSELF

There are two things that should not be confused with each other, namely, what one is and what one does, what one is essentially and what one does in the outside world. They are very different. I know what I am. And what others think or say or whatever happens in the world, that truth remains unaffected, unaltered, a fact. It is real to itself and the world's denial or affirmation does not increase or diminish that reality. But being what I am, what I do actually is altogether a different question: that will depend upon the conditions and circumstances in which things are and in and through which I am to work. I know the truth I bring, but how much of it finds expression in the world depends upon the world itself. What I bring the world must have the capacity and the will to accept: otherwise even if I bring with me the highest and the most imperative truth, it will be absolutely as if non-existent for a consciousness that does not recognise or receive it: the being with that consciousness will not profit a jot by it.

You will say if the truth I bring is supreme and omnipotent, why does it not compel the world to accept it, why can it not break the world's resistance, force man to accept the good it refuses? But that is not the way in which the world was created nor the manner in which it moves and develops. The origin of creation is freedom: it is a free choice in the consciousness that has projected itself as the objective world. This freedom is the very character of its fundamental nature. If the world denies its supreme truth, its highest good, it does so in the delight of its free choice; and if it is to turn back and recognise that truth and that good, it must do so in the same delight of free choice. If the erring world is ordered to turn right and immediately does so, if things were done in a trice, through miracles, there will be then no point in creating a world. Creation means a play of growth: it is a journey, a movement in time and space through graded steps and stages. It is a movement away—away from its source —and a movement towards: that is the principle or plan on which it stands. In this plan there is no compulsion on any of the elements composing the world to forswear its natural movement, to obey to a dictate from outside: such compulsion would break the rhythm of creation.

And yet there is a compulsion. It is the secret pressure of one's own nature that drives it forward through all vicissitudes back again to its original source. When it is said that the Divine Grace can and should do all, it means nothing more and nothing less than that: the Divine Grace

only accelarates the process of return and recognition. But on the side of the journeying element, the soul, there must be awakened a conscious collaboration, an initial consent and a constantly renewed adhesion. It is this that brings out, at least helps to establish outside on the physical level the force that is already and has always been at work within and on the subtler and higher levels. That is the pattern of the play, the system of conditions under which the game is carried out. The Grace works and incarnates in and through a body of willing and conscious cooperators: these become themselves part and parcel of the Force that works.

The truth I bring will manifest and will be embodied upon earth; for, it is the earth's and world's inevitable destiny. The question of time is not relevant. In one respect the truth which I say will be made manifest is already fully manifest, is already realised and established: there is no question of time there. It is in a consciousness timeless or eternally present. There is a process, a play of translation between that timeless poise and the poise in time that we know here below. The measure of that hiatus is very relative, relative to the consciousness that measures, long or short according to the yardstick each one brings. But that is not the essence of the probem: the essence is that the truth is there active, in the process of *materialisation*, only one should have the eye to see it and the soul to greet it.

By remaining psychically open to the Mother, all that is necessary for work or sadhana develops progressively—that is one of the chief secrets, the central secret of the sadhana.

SRI AUROBINDO

EARLY POEMS

EPIGRAM

IF thou wouldst traverse time with vagrant feet
Nor make the poles thy limit, fill not then
Thy wallet with the fancy's cloying sweet
Which is no stay to heaven-aspiring men,
But follow wisdom since alone the wise
Can walk through fire with unblinking eyes.

SONNETS

I

What is this talk of slayer and of slain?
Swords are not sharp to slay nor floods assuage
This flaming soul. Mortality and pain
Are mere conventions of a mightier stage.
As when a hero by his doom pursued
Falls like a pillar of the world uptorn,
Shaking the hearts of men, and awe-imbued
Silent the audience sits of joy forlorn
Meanwhile behind the stage the actor sighs
Deep-lunged relief, puts by what he has been
And talks with friends that waited, or from the flies
Watches the quiet of the closing scene,
Even so the unwounded spirits of slayer and slain
Beyond our vision passing live again.

II

To weep because a glorious sun has set
Which the next morn shall gild the east again;
To mourn that mighty strengths must yield to fate
Which by that force a double strength attain;
To shrink from pain without whose friendly strife
Joy could not be, to make a terror of death
Who smiling beckons us to farther life,
And is a bridge for the persistent breath;
Despair and anguish and the tragic grief
Of dry set eyes, or such disastrous tears
As rend the heart, though meant for its relief,
And all man's ghastly company of fears
Are born of folly that believes the span
Of life, the limit of immortal man.

III

I have a hundred lives before me yet
To grasp thee in, O Spirit ethereal,
Be sure I will with heart insatiate
Pursue thee like a hunter through them all.
Thou yet shalt turn back on the eternal way
And with awakened vision watch me come
Smiling a little at errors past and lay
Thy eager hand in mine, its proper home.
Meanwhile made happy by thy happiness
I shall approach thee in things and people dear,
... ...
Loving what thou hast loved, shall feel thee near,
Until I lay my hands on thee indeed
Somewhere among the stars, as 'twas decreed.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE Mother puts her protection round all the Sadhakas, but if by their own act or attitude they go out of the circle of the protection there may be undesirable consequences...

1-4-1933

* * *

A certain amount of concentration, an inner aspiration in the heart and an opening of the consciousness to the Mother's presence there and to the descent from above are needed.

6-10-1934

* * *

It is by confidence in the Mother that the opening needed will come when your consciousness is ready.

It is not by meditation alone that what is needed will come. It is by faith and openness to the Mother.

9-10-1934

* * *

As a rule the only mantra used in this sadhana is that of the Mother or of my name and the *Mother*. The concentration in the heart and the concentration in the head can both bē used—each has its own result. The first opens up the psychic being and brings bhakti, love and union with the Mother, her presence within the heart and the action of her Force in the nature. The other opens the mind to self-realisation, to the consciousness of what is above mind, to the ascent of the consciousness out of the body and the descent of the higher consciousness into the body.

The object of the sadhana is opening of the consciousness to the Divine and the change of the nature. Meditation or contemplation is one means to this but only one means; bhakti is another; work is another. *Chitta suddhi* was practised by the yogis as a first means towards realisation and they got by it the saintliness of the saint and the quietude of the sage. But the transformation of the nature of which we speak is something more than that, and this transformation does not come by contemplation alone; works are necessary, yoga in action is indispensable.

13-10-1934

* * *

The best help for concentration is to receive the Mother's calm and peace into your mind. It is there above you—only the mind and its centres have to open to it. It is what the Mother is pressing upon you in the evening meditation.

5-11-1934

* * *

An inner (soul) relation means that one feels the Mother's presence, is turned to her at all times, is aware of her force moving, guiding, helping, is full of love for her and always feels a great nearness whether one is physically near her or not. This relation takes up the mind, vital, and inner physical till one feels one's mind close to the Mother's mind, one's vital in harmony with hers, one's very physical consciousness full of her. These are all the elements of the inner union, not only in the spirit and self but in the nature.

I do not recollect what I had written, but this is the close inner relation as opposed to an outer relation which consists only in how one meets her on the external physical plane. It is quite possible and actual to have this close inner relation even if physically one sees her only at *pranam* and meditation and once a year perhaps on the birthday.

29-6-1935

* * *

It is not clear what your Guru meant by my sitting on the path; that could have been true of the period between 1915 and 1920 when I was writing the "Arya", but the sadhana and the work were waiting for the Mother's coming. In 1923 or 1924, I could not be described as sitting on the path, so far as the sadhana was concerned, but it may perhaps be only a metaphor or symbol for the outward form of the work not yet being ready. The statement about my having gone too high to redescend for work in the world was made in almost the identical terms by another Yogi also; it referred to my condition at the time (and) cannot be taken as anything more.

* * *

It was something that happened in the inner being—many see or feel that, the Mother taking them up into higher and higher worlds—afterwards they come down to the physical consciousness which was what is meant by reaching the earth. When she removed her hold on his hands and the strength she had given him for the ascent and higher experience was no longer there as it was coming from her and he had strength in the leg only which means according to this symbolism the strength in the physical or ordinary embodied consciousness. The power of the higher planes was not yet established in him so that he could remain by her side without being held up by her hand.

20-10-1935

* * *

Ego is not so easy to get rid of. It remains not only in spite of work, but in spite of knowledge or bhakti. The disappearance of ego means complete Mukti. Even the yogi who feels his separate being swallowed up in cosmic consciousness or some kind of transcendent consciousness, yet when it comes to outward action and reaction finds the superficial ego still there. That is why the ascetic has a horror of action and says that without ego it can't be done. It can, but fully only when even these outermost things are taken up by the higher consciousness entirely.

26-10-1935

* * *

It is a very common experience—that of the identity between myself and the Mother (the perception that we are one) expressed in the fusing of the two images.

4-11-1935

* * *

It is not a question of liking but of capacity—though usually (not always) liking goes with the capacity. But capacity can be developed and liking can be developed or rather the *rasa* you speak of. One cannot be said to be in the full yogic condition—for the purpose of this Yoga—if one cannot take up with willingness any work given to one as an offering to the Divine. At one time I was absolutely unfit for any physical work and cared only for the mental, but I trained myself in doing physical things with care and perfection so as to overcome this glaring defect in my being and make the bodily instrument apt and conscious. It was the same with some others here. A nature not trained to accept external work and activity becomes mentally top-heavy—physically inert and obscure. It is only if one is disabled or physically too weak that physical work can be put aside altogether. I am speaking of course from the point of view of the ideal—the rest depends upon the nature.

As for the deity presiding over the work as well as over poetry and painting, it is always the same—the Shakti, the Mother.

BHAGAVAD-GITA*

(*A Translation*)

CHAPTER I

DHRITARASHTRA

IN the holy field, the field of the Kurus, assembled for the fight, what did my children, O Sunjoy, what did Pandou's sons?

SUNJOY

Then the king, even Duryodhan, when he beheld the Pandav army marshalled in battle array, approached the master and spoke this word.

"Behold, O Master, this mighty host of the sons of Pandou by Drupad's son, thy wise disciple, marshalled in battle array. There are there heroes and great bowmen, like unto Bhema and Urjoona in war, Yuyudhana and Virata and Drupad, the mighty warrior, Dhristaketou and Chekitana and Kashi's heroic king; and Pourujit, Coontybhoj and Shaivya, lion of men, and Yudhamanyu of mighty deeds and hero Uttamaujas and Subhadra's son and the sons of Draupady, great warriors all. And they who are our chief and first, them also mark, O best of the twice-born,—leaders of my army, for the reckoning let me speak their names, thou and Bhisma and Curna, Cripa victorious in battle, Aswatthama and Vicurna and Soma-dutta's son, and many other courageous hearts that for me have cast their lives behind them, smiters with various weapons and many arms, and all are expert in war. Weak to its task is this our strength but Bheeshma guards the host; sufficient to its task is yonder strength of the foe and Bhema is their guard. Do ye then, each stationed to his work, stand up in all the

* From Old Writings

gates of the war and Bheesma, ever Bheesma do ye guard, yea all guard him alone."

Then giving joy birth in Duryodhan's heart the Grandsire, elder of the Kurus, thundered loud his war-cry's lion roar, and blew his conchshell's biare, the man of might. Then conchshell and bugle, trumpet and horn and drum, all suddenly were smitten and blown, and a huge rushing sound arose. Then in their mighty car erect, their car with snow-white steeds, Madhava and Pandava blew their divine shells, Hrishikesh on Panchajanya, on Devadatta, god-given, Dhanunjoy blew, and on his great shell from far Bengal blew Bhema, wolf-belly, the man of dreadful deeds, and on Anantavijay, boundless conquest, Yudhisthira the king, even Coonty's son, and Nacool and Sahadev on Sughosha, far-sounding and Manipushpaca, jewel-flower. And Kashi's king, that excellent bowman, and Shikhandi, that great fighter, and Dhristadyoumna and Virat and Satyaqy unconquered, and Drupad and the children of Draupady, and Subhadra's great-armed son—all these from all sides blew each his separate shell, O Lord of earth, that the thunder of them tore the hearts of Dhritarashtra's sons and earth and heaven re-echoed with the clamour and the roar. Now as the Ape-bannered, the Pandava, saw the Dhritarashtrians at their war-like posts, so heaved he up his bow and even as the shafts began to fall spake to Hrishikesha this word, O King.

"Right in the midst between either host set thou my car, O unfallen. Let me scan these who stand arrayed and greedy for battle; let me know who must wage war with me in this great holiday of fight. Fain would I see who are these that are here for combat to do in battle the will of Dhritarashtra's witless son."

Thus, O Bharata, to Hrishikesha Gudakesha said, who set in the midst between either army the noble car, in front of Bheesma and Drona and all those kings of earth.

"Lo, O Partha," he said, "all these Kurus met in one field!" There Partha saw fathers and grandsires stand, and teachers and uncles and brothers and sons and grandsons and dear comrades, and fathers of wives and heart's friends, all in either battle opposed. And when the son of Coonty beheld all these dear friends and kindred facing each other in war, his heart was besieged with utter pity and failed him, and he said,

"O Krishna, I behold these kinsmen and friends arrayed in hostile arms and my limbs sink beneath me and my face grows dry, and there are shudderings in my body, and my hair stands on end, Gandeva falls from my

hand and my very skin is on fire. Yea, I cannot stand and my brain whirls, and evil omens, O Keshava, meet mine eyes. I can see no blessing for me, having slain my kin in fight. I desire not victory, O Krishna, no nor kingship nor delights. What shall we do with kingship, O Govinda, what with enjoyments, what with life? They for whose sake we desire kingship and enjoyments and delight, lo they all stand in battle against us casting behind them their riches and lives, our teachers and our fathers and our sons, our grandsires and uncles and the fathers of our wives, and our grandsons and our wives' brothers and the kin of our beloved. These, though they slay me, O Madhushudan, I would not slay, no not for the empire of heaven and space and hell, much less for this poor earth of ours. Slaying the sons of Dhritarashtra what joy would be left to us, O Janardana? Sin, sin alone would find lodging in us, if we slew these, though our adversaries and foes. Therefore we do not right to slay the children of Dhritarashtra and their friends, for how can we be happy, O Madhava, if we slay our kin? Even though these see not, for their hearts are swept away by greed, error done in the ruin of our house and grievous sin in treachery to natural friends, how shall we not understand and turn back from this sin, we who have eyes, O Janardana, for error done in the ruin of our house? When the family dwindle, the eternal ideals of the race are lost, and when ideals are lost, unrighteousness besets the whole race; in the prevalence of unrighteousness, O Krishna, the women of the race go astray, and when women grow corrupt, bastard confusion is born again; but confusion brings the slayers of the race and the race itself to very hell, for the long line of fathers perishes and the food ceaseth and the water is given no more. By these sins who bring their race to perdition, fathers they of bastard confusion, the eternal ideals of the nation and the hearth are overthrown, and for men who have lost the ancient righteousness of the race, in hell an eternal habitation is set apart, it is told. Alas, a dreadful sin have we set ourselves to do, that we have made ready, from greed of lordship and pleasure, to slay our own kin. Yea, even if the sons of Dhritarashtra slay me with their armed hands, me unarmed and unresisting, it were better and more fortunate for me than this."

Thus spake Urjoona, and in the very battle's heart sat down upon his chariot seat, and let fall his bow when the arrow was on the string, for his soul was perplexed with grief.

SRI AUROBINDO

PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS*

II

Nature of the Absolute Brahman

VIEWED in the light of these four great illuminations the utterances of the Upanishads arrange themselves and fall into a perfect harmony. European scholars like Max Muller have seen in these Scriptures a mass of heterogeneous ideas where the sublime jostles the childish, the grandiose walks arm-in-arm with the grotesque, the most petty trivialities feel at home with the rarest and most solemn philosophical intuitions, and they have accordingly declared them to be the babblings of a child humanity; inspired children, idiots endowed with genius, such to the Western view are the great Rishis of the Aranyaka. But the view is suspect from its very nature. It is not likely that men who handle the ultimate and most difficult intellectual problems with such mastery, precision and insight, would babble mere folly in matters which require the use of much lower faculties. Their utterances in this less exalted sphere may be true or they may be erroneous, but, it may fairly be assumed, they gave them forth with a perfectly clear idea of their bearing and signification. To an understanding totally unacquainted with the methods by which they are arrived at, many of the established conclusions of modern Science would seem unutterably grotesque and childish,—the babblings if not of a child humanity at least of humanity in its dotage; and yet only a little accurate knowledge is needed to show that these grotesque trivialities are well-ascertained and irrefragable truths.

In real truth the Upanishads are in all their parts, allowing for imaginative language and an occasional element of symbolism, quite rational, consistent and homogeneous. They are not concerned indeed to create an artificial impression of consistency by ignoring the various aspects of this manifold Universe and reducing all things to a single denomination; for they are not

* From Old Writings

metaphysical treatises aiming at mathematical abstractness or geometrical precision and consistency. They are a great store of observations, and spiritual experiences with conclusions and generalisations from those observations and experiences, set down without any thought of controversial caution or any anxiety to avoid logical contradictions. Yet they have the consistency of all truthful observation and honest experience; they arrange themselves naturally and without set purpose under one grand universal truth developed into a certain number of wide general laws within whose general agreement there is room for infinite particular variations and even anomalies. They have in other words a scientific rather than a logical consistency.

To the rigorous logician bound in his narrow prison of verbal reasoning, the Upanishads seem indeed to base themselves on an initial and fundamental inconsistency. There are a number of passages in these Scriptures which dwell with striking emphasis on the unknowableness of the Absolute Brahman. It is distinctly stated that neither mind nor senses can reach the Brahman and that words return baffled from the attempt to describe It; more,—that we do not discern the Absolute and Transcendent in Its reality, nor can we discriminate the right way or perhaps any way of teaching the reality of It to others; and it is even held, that It can only be properly characterised in negative language and that to every challenge for definition the only true answer is *Neti Neti, It is not this, It is not that.* Brahman is not definable, not describable, not intellectually knowable. And yet in spite of these passages the Upanishads constantly declare that Brahman is the one true object of knowledge and the whole Scripture is in fact an attempt not perhaps to define, but at least in some sort to characterise and present an idea, and even a detailed idea, of the Brahman.

The inconsistency is more apparent than real. The Brahman in Its ultimate reality is transcendent, absolute, infinite; but the senses and the intellect, which the senses supply with material, are finite; speech also is limited by the deficiencies of the intellect; Brahman must therefore in Its very nature be unknowable to the intellect and beyond the power of Speech to describe,—yet only in Its ultimate reality, not in Its aspects or manifestations. The Agnostic Scientist also believes that there must be some great ultimate Reality unknown and probably unknowable to man (*ignoramus etignorabimus*) from which this Universe proceeds and on which all phenomena depend, but his admission of Unknowableness is confined to the ultimate Nature of this supreme Ens and not to its expression or manifestation in the Universe. The Upanishad, proceeding by a profounder

method than material analysis, casts the net of knowledge wider than the modern Agnostic, yet in the end its attitude is much the same; it differs only in this important respect that it asserts even the ultimate Brahman to be although inexpressible in the terms of finite knowledge, yet realisable and attainable.

The first great step to the realisation of the Brahman is by the knowledge of Him as manifested in the phenomenal Universe; for if there is no reality but Brahman, the phenomenal Universe which is obviously a manifestation of *something* permanent and eternal, must be a manifestation of Brahman and of nothing else, and if we know it completely, we do to a certain extent and in a certain way, know Him, not as an Absolute Existence, but under the conditions of phenomenal manifestation. While, however, European Science seeks only to know the phenomena of gross matter, the Yogin goes farther. He asserts that he has discovered an universe of subtle matter penetrating and surrounding the gross; this universe to which the spirit withdraws partially and for a brief time in sleep but more entirely and for a longer time through the gates of death, is the source whence all psychic processes draw their origin; and the link which connects this universe with the gross material world is to be found in the phenomena of life and mind. His assertion is perfectly positive and the Upanishad proceeds on it as on an ascertained and indisputable fact quite beyond the limits of mere guess work, inference or speculation. But he goes yet farther and declares that there is yet a third universe of causal matter penetrating and surrounding both the subtle and the gross, and that this universe to which the spirit withdraws in the deepest and most abysmal states of sleep and trance and also in a remote condition beyond the state of man after death, is the source whence all phenomena take their rise. If we are to understand the Upanishads we must accept these to us astounding statements, temporarily at least; for on them the whole scheme of Vedanta is built. Now Brahman manifests Himself in each of these Universes, in the Universe of causal Matter as the Cause, Self and Inspirer, poetically styled, Prajna the Wise One; in the universe of subtle matter as the Creator, Self and Container, styled Hiranya Garbha the Golden Embryo of life and form, and in the universe of gross matter as the Ruler, Guide, Self and Helper, styled Virat the Shining and mighty One. And in each of these manifestations He can be known and realised by the spirit of man.

Granted the truth of these remarkable assertions, what then is the relation between the Supreme Self and man? The position has already been quite

definitely taken that the transcendent Self in man is identically the same as the transcendent Self in the Universe and that this identity is the one great key to the knowledge of the Absolute Brahman. Does not this position rule out of court any such differences between the Absolute and the human Self as is implied in the character of the triple manifestation of Brahman? On the one hand completest identity of the Supreme Self and the human is asserted as an ascertained and experienced fact, on the other hand widest difference is asserted as an equally well-ascertained and experienced fact; there can be no reconciliation between these incompatible statements. Yet are they both facts, answers Vedanta; identity *is* a fact in the reality of things; difference *is* a fact in the appearance of things, the world of phenomena; for phenomena are in their essence nothing but seemings and the difference between the individual Self and the Universal Self is the fundamental seeming which makes all the rest possible. This difference grows as the manifestation of Brahman proceeds. In the world of gross matter, it is complete; the difference is so acute, that it is impossible for the material sensual being to conceive of the Supreme Soul as having any point of contact with his own soul and it is only by a long process of evolution that he arrives at the illumination in which some kind of identity becomes to him conceivable. The basal conception for Mind as conditioned by gross matter is Dualistic; the knower here must be different from the Known and his whole intellectual development consists in the discovery, development and perfected use of ever new media and methods of knowledge. Undoubtedly the ultimate knowledge he arrives at brings him to the fundamental truth of identity between himself and the Supreme Self, but in the sphere of gross phenomena this identity can never be more than an intellectual conception, it can never be verified by personal realisation. On the other hand it can be *felt*, by the supreme sympathy of love and faith, either through love of humanity and of all other fellow-beings or directly through love of God. This feeling of identity is very strong in religions based largely on the sentiment of Love and Faith. I and my Father are One, cried the Founder of Christianity; I and my brother man and my brother beast are One, says Buddhism; St. Francis spoke of Air as his brother and Water as his sister; and the Hindu devotee when he sees a bullock lashed falls down in pain with the mark of the whip on his own body. But the feeling of Oneness remaining only a feeling does not extend into knowledge and therefore these religions while emotionally pervaded with the sense of identity, tend in the sphere of intellect to a militant Dualism or to any other

but always unmonistic standpoint. Dualism is therefore no mere delusion; it is a truth, but a phenomenal truth and not the ultimate reality of things.

As it proceeds in the work of discovering and perfecting methods of knowledge, the individual self finds an entry into the universe of subtle phenomena. Here the difference that divides it from the Supreme Self is less acute; for the bonds of matter are lightened and the great agents of division and disparity, Time and Space, diminish in the insistency of their pressure. The individual here comes to realise a certain unity with the great Whole; he is enlarged and aggrandized into a part of the Universal Self, but the sense of identity is not complete and cannot be complete. The basal conception for Mind in this subtle Universe is Dualo-Monistic; the knower is not quite different from the known; he is like and of the same substance but inferior, smaller and dependent; his sense of oneness may amount to similarity and cosubstantiality but not to coincidence and perfect identity.

From the subtle Universe the individual self rises in its evolution until it is able to enter the universe of Causal matter, where it stands near to the fountain-head. In this universe media and methods of knowledge begin to disappear, Mind comes into almost direct relations with its source and the difference between the individual and the Supreme Self is greatly attenuated. Nevertheless there is here too a wall of difference, even though it wears eventually thin as the thinnest paper. The knower is aware that he is coeval and coexistent with the Supreme Self, he is aware of a sense of omnipresence, for wherever the Supreme Self is, there also he is; he is, moreover, on the other side of phenomena and can see the Universe at will without him or within him; but he has still not necessarily realised the supreme as utterly himself, although this perfect realisation is now for the first time in his grasp. The basal perception for Mind in this Universe is Monism with a difference, but the crowning perception of Monism becomes here possible.

And when it is no longer only possible but grasped? Then the individual Self entering into full realisation, ceases in any sense to be the individual Self, but merges into and becomes again the eternal and absolute Brahman, without parts, unbeginning, undecaying, unchanging. He has passed beyond causality and phenomena and is no longer under the bondage of that which is only by seeming. This is the *Laya* or utter absorption of Hinduism, the highest *nirvāna* or extinction from phenomena of the Upanishads and of Buddhist metaphysics. It is obviously a state which words fail to describe, since words which are created to express relations and have no meaning

except when they express relations, cannot deal successfully with a state which is perfectly pure, absolute and unrelated; nor is it a condition which the bounded and finite intellect of man on this plane can for a moment envisage. This unintelligibility of the Supreme state is naturally a great stumbling-block to the undisciplined imagination of our present-day humanity which, being sensuous, emotional and intellectual, inevitably recoils from a bliss in which neither the senses, emotions nor intellect have any place. Surely, we cry, the extinction or quietude of all these sources and means of sensation and pleasure imply not supreme bliss but absolute nothingness, blank annihilation. "An error", answers the Vedanta, "a pitiful, grovelling error! Why is it that the senses cease in that supreme condition? Because the senses were evolved in order to sense external being and where externality ceases, they having no action cease to exist. The emotions too are directed outwards and need another for their joy, they can only survive so long as we are incomplete. The intellect similarly is and works only so long as there is something external to it and ungrasped. But to the Most High there is nothing ungrasped, the Most High depends on none for His joy. He has therefore neither emotions nor intellect, nor can he either who merges in and becomes the Most High, possess them for a moment after that high consummation. The deprivation of the limited senses in His boundlessness is not a loss or an extinction, but must be a fulfilment, a development into Being which rejoices in its own infinity. The disappearance of our broken and transient emotions in His completeness must bring us not into a cold void but rather into illimitable bliss. The culmination of knowledge by the supersession of our divided and fallible intellect must lead not to utter darkness and blank vacuity but to the luminous ecstasy of an infinite Consciousness. Not the annihilation of Being, but utter fullness of Being is our Nirvana." And when this ecstatic language is brought to the touchstone of reason, it must surely be declared just and even unanswerable. For the final absolution of the intellect can only be at a point where the Knower, Knowledge and the Known become one, Knowledge being there infinite, direct and without media. And where there is this infinite and flawless knowledge, there must be, one thinks, infinite and flawless existence and bliss. But by the very conditions of this stage, we can only say of it that it is, we cannot define it inwards, precisely because we cannot realize it with the intellect. The Self can be realized only with the Self; there is no other instrument of realization.

Granted, it may be said, that such a state is conceivably possible,—as

certainly it is, starting from your premises, the only and inevitable conclusion,—but what proof have we that it exists as a reality? What proof can even your Yoga bring to us that it exists? For when the individual Self becomes identified with the Supreme, its evolution is over and it does not return into phenomena to tell its experiences. The question is a difficult one to handle, partly because language, if it attempts to deal with it at all precisely, must become so abstract and delicate as to be unintelligible, partly because the experiences it involves are so far off from our present general evolution and attained so rarely that dogmatism or even definite statement appears almost unpardonable. Nevertheless with the using of metaphorical language, or, in St. Paul's words,—speaking as a fool, one may venture to outline what there is at all to be said on the subject. The truth then seems to be that there are even in this last or fourth State of the Self, stages and degrees, as to the number of which experience varies; but for practical purposes we may speak of three, the first when we stand at the entrance of the porch and look within; the second when we stand at the inner extremity of the porch and are really face to face with the Eternal; the third when we enter into the Holy of Holies. Be it remembered that the language I am using is the language of metaphor and must not be pressed with a savage literalness. Well then, the first stage is well within the possible experience of man and from it man returns to be a Jivanmukta, one who lives and is yet released in his inner self from the bondage of phenomenal existence; the second stage once reached, man does not ordinarily return, unless he is a supreme Buddha,—or perhaps as a world Avatar; from the third stage none returns, nor is it attainable in the body. Brahman as realised by the Jivanmukta, seen from the entrance of the porch, is that which we usually term Parabrahman, the Supreme Eternal and the subject of the most exalted descriptions of the Vedanta. There are therefore five conditions of Brahman. Brahman Virat, Master of the Waking Universe; Brahman Hiranya garbha, of the Dream Universe; Brahman Prajna or Avyakta of the Trance Universe of Unmanifestation; Parabrahman, the Highest; and that which is higher than the highest, the Unknowable. Now of the Unknowable it is not profitable to speak, but something of Parabrahman can be made intelligible to the human understanding because—always if the liberal use of loose metaphors is not denied,—it can be partially brought within the domain of speech.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE MYSTERY OF LOVE*

THE adoration of the impersonal Divine would not be strictly a Yoga of devotion according to the current interpretation; for in the current forms of Yoga it is supposed that the Impersonal can only be sought for a complete unity in which God and our own person disappear and there is none to adore or to be adored; only the delight of the experience of oneness and infinity remains. But in truth, the miracles of spiritual consciousness are not to be subjected to so rigid a logic. When we first come to feel the presence of the infinite, as it is the finite personality in us which is touched by it, that may well answer to the touch and call with a sort of adoration. Secondly, we may regard the Infinite not so much as a spiritual status of oneness and bliss, but rather as the presence of the ineffable Godhead to our consciousness, and then too love and adoration find their place. And even when our personality seems to disappear into unity with it, it may still be—and really is—the individual divine who is melting to the universal or the supreme by a union in which love and lover and loved are forgotten in a fusing experience of ecstasy, but are still there latent in the oneness and subconsciently persisting in it. All union of the self by love must necessarily be of this nature. We may even say, in a sense, that it is to have this joy of union as the ultimate crown of all the varied experiences of spiritual relation between the individual soul and God that the One became many in the universe.

Still, the more varied and most intimate experience of divine love cannot come by the pursuit of the impersonal Infinite alone; for that the Godhead we adore must become near and personal to us. It is possible for the Impersonal to reveal within itself all the riches of personality when we get into its heart, and one who sought only to enter into or to embrace the infinite Presence alone, may discover in it things he had not dreamed of; the being of the Divine has surprises for us which confound the ideas of the limiting

* *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part II (The Yoga of Devotion), Chap. VIII

intellect. But ordinarily the way of devotion begins from the other end; it starts from and it rises and widens to its issue by adoration of the divine Personality. The Divine is a Being and not an abstract existence or a status of pure timeless infinity; the original and universal existence is He, but that existence is inseparable from consciousness and bliss of being, and an existence conscious of its own being and its own bliss is what we may well call a divine infinite Person,—Purusha. Moreover all consciousness implies power, Shakti; where there is infinite consciousness of being, there is infinite power of being, and by that power all exists in the universe. All beings exist by this Being; all things are the faces of God; all thought and action and feeling and love proceed from him and return to him, all their results have him for source and support and secret goal. It is to this Godhead, this Being that the Bhakti of an integral Yoga will be poured out and uplifted. Transcendent, it will seek him in the ecstasy of an absolute union; universal, it will seek him in infinite quality and every aspect and in all beings with a universal delight and love; individual, it will enter into all human relations with him that love creates between person and person.

It may not be possible to seize from the beginning on all the complete integrality of that which the heart is seeking; in fact, is only possible if the intelligence, the temperament, the emotional mind have already been developed into largeness and fineness by the trend of our previous living. That is what the experience of the normal life is meant to lead to by its widening culture of the intellect, the aesthetic and emotional mind and of our parts too of will and active experience. It widens and refines the normal being so that it may open easily to all the truth of That which was preparing it for the temple of its self-manifestation. Ordinarily, man is limited in all these parts of his being and he can grasp at first only so much of the divine truth as has some large correspondence to his own nature and its past development and associations. Therefore God meets us first in different limited affirmations of his divine qualities and nature; he presents himself to the seeker as an absolute of the things he can understand and to which his will and heart can respond; he discloses some name and aspect of his Godhead. This is what is called in Yoga the *ishta-devatā*, the name and form elected by our nature for its worship. In order that the human being may embrace this Godhead with every part of himself, it is represented with a form that answers to its aspects and qualities and which becomes the living body of God to the adorer. These are those forms of Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, Kali, Durga, Christ, Buddha, which the mind of man seizes on for adoration.

Even the monotheist who worships a formless Godhead, yet gives to him some form of quality, some mental form or form of Nature by which he envisages and approaches him. But to be able to see a living form, a mental body, as it were, of the Divine gives to the approach a greater closeness and sweetness.

The way of the integral Yoga of bhakti will be to universalise this conception of the Deity, to personalise him intimately by a multiple and all-embracing relation, to make him constantly present to all the being and to devote, give up, surrender the whole being to him, so that he shall dwell near to us and in us and we with him and in him. *Manana* and *darshana*, a constant thinking of him in all things and seeing of him always and everywhere is essential to this way to devotion. When we look on the things of physical Nature, in them we have to see the divine object of our love; when we look upon men and beings, we have to see him in them and in our relation with them to see that we are entering into relations with forms of him; when breaking beyond the limitation of the material world we know or have relations with the beings of other planes, still the same thought and vision has to be made real to our minds. The normal habit of our minds which are open only to the material and apparent form and the ordinary mutilated relation and ignore the secret Godhead within, has to yield by an unceasing habit of all-embracing love and delight to this deeper and ampler comprehension and this greater relation. In all godheads we have to see this one God whom we worship with our heart and all our being; they are forms of his divinity. So enlarging our spiritual embrace we reach a point at which all is he and the delight of this consciousness becomes to us our normal uninterrupted way of looking at the world. That brings us the outward or objective universality of our union with him.

Inwardly, the image of the Beloved has to become visible to the eye within, dwelling in us as in his mansion, informing our hearts with the sweetness of his presence, presiding over all our activities of mind and life as the friend, master and lover from the summit of our being, uniting us from above with himself in the universe. A constant inner communion is the joy to be made close and permanent and unfailing. This communion is not to be confined to an exceptional nearness and adoration when we retire quite into ourselves away from our normal preoccupations, nor is it to be sought by a putting away of our human activities. All our thoughts, impulses, feelings, actions have to be referred to him for his sanction or

disallowance, or if we cannot yet reach this point, to be offered to him in our sacrifice of aspiration, so that he may more and more descend into us and be present in them all and pervade them with all his will and power, his light and knowledge, his love and delight. In the end all our thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions will begin to proceed from him and change into some divine seed and form of themselves; in our whole inner living we shall have grown conscious of ourselves as a part of his being till between the existence of the Divine whom we adore and our own lives there is no longer any division. So too in all happenings we have to come to see the dealings with us of the divine Lover and take such pleasure in them that even grief and suffering and physical pain become his gifts and turn to delight and disappear finally into delight, slain by the sense of the divine contact, because the touch of his hands is the alchemist of a miraculous transformation. Some reject life because it is tainted with grief and pain, but to the God-lover grief and pain become means of meeting with him, imprints of his pressure and finally cease as soon as our union with his nature becomes too complete for these masks of the universal delight at all to conceal it. They change into the Ananda.

All the relations by which this union comes about, become on this path intensely and blissfully personal. That which in the end contains, takes up or unifies them all, is the relation of lover and beloved, because that is the most intense and blissful of all and carries up all the rest into its heights and yet exceeds them. He is the teacher and guide and leads us to knowledge; at every step of the developing inner light and vision, we feel his touch like that of the artist moulding our clay of mind, his voice revealing the truth and its word, the thought he gives us to which we respond, the flashing of his spears of lightning which chase the darkness of our ignorance. Especially, in proportion as the partial lights of the mind become transformed into lights of gnosis, in whatever slighter or greater degree that may happen, we feel it as a transformation of our mentality into his and more and more he becomes the thinker and seer in us. We cease to think and see for ourselves, but think only what he wills to think for us and see only what he sees for us. And then the teacher is fulfilled in the lover; he lays hands on all our mental being to embrace and possess, to enjoy and use it.

He is the Master; but in this way of approach all distance and separation, all awe and fear and mere obedience disappear, because we become too close and united with him for these things to endure and it is the lover of

our being who takes it up and occupies and uses and does with it whatever he wills. Obedience is the sign of the servant, but that is the lowest stage of this relation, *dāsya*. Afterwards we do not obey, but move to his will as the string replies to the finger of the musician. To be the instrument is this higher stage of self-surrender and submission. But this is the living and loving instrument and it ends in the whole nature of our being becoming the slave of God, rejoicing in his possession and its own blissful subjection to the divine grasp and mastery. With a passionate delight it does all he wills it to do without questioning and bears all he would have it bear, because what it bears is the burden of the beloved being.

He is the friend, the adviser, helper, saviour in trouble and distress, the defender from enemies, the hero who fights our battles for us or under whose shield we fight, the charioteer, the pilot of our ways. And here we come at once to a closer intimacy; he is the comrade and eternal companion, the playmate of the game of living. But still there is so far a certain division, however pleasant, and friendship is too much limited by the appearance of beneficence. The lover can wound, abandon, be wroth with us, seem to betray, yet our love endures and even grows by these oppositions; through them the lover remains the friend, and all that he does we find in the end has been done by the lover and helper of our being for our soul's perfection as well as for his joy in us. These contradictions lead to a greater intimacy. He is the father and mother too of our being, its source and protector and its indulgent cherisher and giver of our desires. He is the child born to our desire whom we cherish and rear. All these things the lover takes up; his love in its intimacy and oneness keeps in it the paternal and maternal care and lends itself to our demands upon it. All is unified in that deepest many-sided relation.

From the beginning even it is possible to have this closest relation of the lover and beloved, but it will not be as exclusive for the integral Yogin as for certain purely ecstatic ways of Bhakti. It will from the beginning take into itself something of the hues of the other relations, since he follows too knowledge and works and has need of the Divine as teacher, friend and master. The growing of the love of God must carry with it in him an expansion of the knowledge of God and of the action of the divine Will in his nature and living. The divine Lover reveals himself; he takes possession of the life. But still the essential relation will be that of love from which all things flow, love passionate, complete, seeking a hundred ways of ful-

filment, every means of mutual possession, a million facets of the joy of union. All the distinctions of the mind, all its barriers and "cannot be"s, all the cold analyses of the reason are mocked at by this love or they are only used as the tests and fields and gates of union. Love comes to us in many ways; it may come as an awakening to the beauty of the Lover, by the sight of an ideal face and image of him, by his mysterious hints to us of himself behind the thousand faces of things in the world, by a slow or sudden need of the heart, by a vague thirst in the soul, by the sense of someone near us drawing us or pursuing us with love or of someone blissful and beautiful whom we must discover.

We may seek after him passionately and pursue the unseen beloved; but also the lover whom we think not of, may pursue us, may come upon us in the midst of the world and seize on us for his own whether at first we will or no. Even, he may come to us at first as an enemy, with the wrath of love, and our earliest relations with him may be those of battle and struggle. Where first there is love and attraction, the relations between the Divine and the soul may still for long be chequered with misunderstanding and offence, jealousy and wrath; strife and the quarrels of love, hope and despair and the pain of absence and separation. We throw up all the passions of the heart against him, till they are purified into a sole ecstasy of bliss and oneness. But that too is no monotony; it is not possible for the tongue of human speech to tell all the utter unity and all the eternal variety of the ananda of divine love. Our higher and our lower members are both flooded with it, the mind and life no less than the soul: even the physical body takes its share of the joy, feels the touch, is filled in all its limbs, veins, nerves with the flowing of the wine of the ecstasy, *amrita*. Love and Ananda are the last word of being, the secret of secrets, the mystery of mysteries.

Thus universalised, personalised, raised to its intensities, made all-occupying, all-embracing, all-fulfilling, the way of love and delight gives the supreme liberation. Its highest crest is a supracosmic union. But for love complete union is *mukti*; liberation has to it no other sense; and it includes all kinds of mukti together, nor are they in the end, as some would have it, merely successive to each other and therefore mutually exclusive. We have the absolute union of the divine with the human spirit, *sāyujya*; in that reveals itself a content of all that depends here upon difference, but there the difference is only form of oneness,—ananda too of nearness and contact and mutual presence, *sāmipya*, *sālokya*, ananda of mutual re-

flection, the thing that we call likeness, *sādrisya*, and other wonderful things too for which language has as yet no name. There is nothing which is beyond the reach of the God-lover or denied to him; for he is the favourite of the divine Lover and the self of the Beloved.

SRI AUROBINDO

Of course the ego and the vital with its claims and desires are always the main obstacle to the emergence of the psychic. For they make one live, act, do sadhana even for one's own sake and psychicisation means to live, act and do sadhana for the sake of the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE DIVINE COLLABORATORS

EVEN those who have only a smattering of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and philosophy know that they aim at these three signal achievements: (1) ascent of the consciousness of man from mind to Supermind, which is the Truth-consciousness, the Rita-chit of the Veda; (2) descent of the Supermind into Matter and the conversion and transformation of the integral nature of man—physical, vital and mental—by the Light-Force of the Supermind, and (3) the perfect manifestation of Sachchidananda on earth through the transformed and divinised human nature. Sri Aurobindo does not subscribe to the world-shunning asceticism of the old schools of spiritual discipline, nor does he advocate the hedonistic enjoyment of life lived in the Ignorance and in the trailing turmoil of the dualities. His message is of the essential divinity of man and the inevitable fullness and perfection of its self-expression in life, on this earth and in the human body. He does not regard a union with God or Brahman only in the depths or on the heights of the being as a complete union. Man's birth-right, he affirms, is a constant, dynamic, integral union—a union in the nature as well as in the soul; in every little movement of life as well as in the stirless silence of ecstatic contemplation. Life must become a sparkling flood of Light and its jarring discords pass into the inalienable harmony of the supramental consciousness reigning over earth.

It goes without saying that this triple aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and philosophy is a revolutionary departure and is absolutely original to his spiritual genius. There is no precedent or parallel to it in the annals of spirituality, oriental or occidental, ancient or modern. It is true that in the Veda we meet with some references to the Rita-Chit or the supermind. It is described there as the Truth, the Right, the Vast; as the supreme step of Vishnu; and some Vedic Rishis endeavoured to rise into its solar glory. But there is no trace of a collective ascent into it or of any attempt on their part to bring it down into the material life for a conversion of the earth-consciousness. It was even held by some Rishis that it was not

possible to pass through the gates of the Sun, i.e., the Supermind, and yet retain the human body. The Upanishadic Rishis knew of the existence of this supreme Truth-consciousness, which they called the Vijnana, but the Vedic urge towards it was no longer there in its ancient intensity and amplitude. However that may be, it is Sri Aurobindo who first fixes upon the creative Supermind as the goal of human evolution and labours to call down and canalise its all-achieving Force for the birth of a new race of humanity, the race of gnostic supermen. This new birth will be an emergence of man, as the culmination of his evolutionary progression, into the supreme Truth-Consciousness, which will admit of a simultaneous realisation of and union with the transcendent Sachchidananda and His universal Immanence—a consummation not yet achieved by man. But in order that this emergence may be complete and securely established on earth, it is essential, as a pre-condition, that Matter should be transmuted into the luminous substance of the divine existence from which it is derived, and that the physical nature of man should, in consequence, be definitively freed from the dark density, inertia and insensibility which are its heritage from its inconscient origin. Physical transformation by means of the authentic supramental Force is, therefore, the crux of the mission of Sri Aurobindo's life, and it presages a future for humanity which is too glorious even for the widest and keenest mind of the modern man to conceive.

This sublime ideal and a definite spiritual guidance to realise it and make it a concrete experience and an abiding base of all life's activities and achievements, are the special gift of Sri Aurobindo to man. But it is very interesting that the same ideal had been the shaping truth and realising force in the Mother's life even when she was in France and knowing absolutely nothing of Sri Aurobindo and his thoughts. Conscious of the great mission of her life from her very childhood and confirmed in her foreknowledge by certain remarkable visions and mystical experiences, she had been pursuing her spiritual life and steadily rising to her destined stature. Her "Prayers and Meditations", in which she has transcribed some of her experiences, bear surprising testimony to the essential identity which had existed between her ideal and that of Sri Aurobindo even before she met him in person on the 29th March, 1914. We cannot account for this identity by deriving it from the mystical traditions of the West, which do not seem to be aware of the Supermind or any such plane of creative Truth-consciousness, where man can have a perfect union, in silence and in action, and a simultaneous self-identification with the Transcendent and the Immanent. The general

trend of mystical thought in the West, in spite of the towering achievements of Ruysbroeck and St. Teresa, inclines towards a denial of the possibility of a complete and constant union with God in human life. "Man shall not see my face and live" has been accepted more or less literally by almost all the leading Western mystics. St. Gregory the Great believes that "no one is able to fix the mind's eye on the unencompassed ray itself of Light." One can only "attain to somewhat of the unencompassed Light by stealth and scantily." St. Bernard agrees with St. Gregory that "those who by transport of contemplation are at times rapt in spirit, are able to taste some little fragment of the sweetness of supernal felicity," though rarely and momentarily. Couched in the same key, but weightier in authority, is St. Augustine's verdict, "Contemplation is only begun in this life, to be perfected in the next" (Tract. in Ioan. cxxiv. 5).

This then is the prevailing conception in the West of divine union or contemplation, though it is somewhat contradicted by the experiences of a few mystics here and there. Regarding the descent of the supernal Light and the consequent transformation of human nature, it has always been a doubtful and mystified issue. True it is that the Orphic Mysteries aimed at some kind of transformation or deification, but what they meant by transformation and how they proposed actually to achieve it has been a lost science, having had little bearing on the life of the subsequent Western mystics. Besides, the question of the manifestation of God in matter has hardly ever seriously exercised the thought of Western mysticism. That the physical nature of man, which has its roots in the murky depths of the Inconscient and most of its motive forces in the obscure welter of the Subconscient, can be, not only purified, but completely converted and transmuted into the divine Nature, is a possibility unexplored even by the greatest mystics of the West.

In the absence of any such tradition in the West from which the Mother might have imbibed the main strands of her manifestational and life-transfiguring mysticism, and in view of her later domicile in India and self-identification with Sri Aurobindo's life-work, we think we are justified in regarding her spiritual development in the West as a prelude to and a preparation for her work in India, which is a work for the whole of humanity, and seeing in the identity between her ideal and that of Sri Aurobindo an evidence of the decree of God that East and West must meet as Shiva and Shakti, self-manifesting Light and realising and transforming Force, to raise man from mind to supermind and convert his life of division and

discord into the creative unity and blissful harmony of the Life Divine.

The "Prayers and Meditations of the Mother" begins from November 2, 1912 and ends on October 23, 1937. Out of a total of over 360 there are only six Prayers from 1919 to 1937, the rest all ranging from 1912 to 1918. Here we shall confine ourselves only to the Prayers written between 1912 and March 28, 1914[1]—about 97 Prayers, which bear eloquent testimony to the great ideal which was defining itself more and more clearly and pressing forward towards self-realisation in the Mother. We shall also draw upon some of her youthful writings in the form of discourses, delivered before select audiences in France, to substantiate our thesis that the identity between the ideal of the Mother's life and that of Sri Aurobindo's, even when they did not know each other on the physical plane, was not a chance coincidence, but a decree and dispensation of Providence for the great work of the future. To say that their souls are complementary to each other, that is, each filling up what lacks in the other, as some people have suggested, is not true; for, a searching perusal of their respective thoughts before their meeting on the physical plane does not bear it out. The Mother's mission is so definitely outlined in the Prayers of between 1912 and 1914 that it betrays no trace of an incompleteness or a wide gap anywhere to be filled up in the future; and Sri Aurobindo's thoughts and ideals are blazoned even in his earliest utterances and writings,—in his prose writings and, particularly in his poems,—so that there is no room for any doubt as to what he regarded as his life's work. To say that Sri Aurobindo represents the static aspect of the Divine and the Mother the dynamic, is again not true; for the pulsing heart of their teachings is the divine dynamism, which they have both been labouring to instil into the earth-life. To call Sri Aurobindo static is to miss the very significance and the central, distinctive truth of his life and ideal. And that there is not only dynamism, but an untrembling status of eternal peace and repose in the Mother, will be amply proved by the Prayers we shall quote in the course of this essay. The truth of the matter is that the identity of their ideal was a natural flowering of the identity of their beings, and that their meeting from the two hemispheres was neither a chance nor a conjunction of complementaries, but a providential reunion of identities, separated for a time for the exigencies of the evolutionary terrestrial existence.

It is true that there are certain Prayers in the "Prayers and Meditations",

[1] The Mother met Sri Aurobindo on the 29th March, 1914, as said above.

particularly those written immediately after the Mother's meeting with Sri Aurobindo, in which she speaks of all her inner constructions having vanished like a vain dream and herself left before the immensity of the divine "without any frame or system, like a being not yet individualised." That a great change took place in her, a marvellous new birth, as a result of her very first contact with Sri Aurobindo, is clearly recorded in the Prayers and Meditations; but it was a change in the methods and processes of her spiritual self-discipline and a new birth of her phenomenal being, or more accurately perhaps, a re-affirmation, a re-foundation, *ab initio* of what was already achieved. "All the past, *in its external form*, appears to me ridiculous and arbitrary, and yet I know that it was useful in its time." Describing this state in another Prayer (dated April 3, 1914), the Mother says, "It is as if I was stripped of all my past, of my errors as well as my conquests, as if all that had disappeared to give place to one new-born whose whole existence has yet to take shape, who has no Karma, no experience it can profit by, but no error either which it must repair....I know that I must now definitively give myself up and be like a page absolutely blank on which Thy thought, Thy Will, O Lord, will be able to inscribe themselves freely, secure against any deformation." It was, indeed, a monumental revolution, a massive whirlwind preparation that took place in her; and as a result of it, a flood of new experiences came, tending to complete the divine union she had been longing for and clinching the role she was to play in the work of the creation of a supramental race of men initiated by Sri Aurobindo.

"The 'I' has disappeared, there is only a docile instrument put at thy service, a centre of concentration and manifestation of Thy infinite and eternal rays; Thou hast taken my life and made it Thine; Thou hast taken my will and united it to Thine; Thou hast taken my love and identified it with Thine; Thou hast taken my thought and replaced it by Thy absolute Consciousness". (April 10 1914). But whatever the nature and magnitude of the change, the ideal and mission of her life, as outlined in the enlarging prescience of her early years, remained essentially the same. That these modifications and even radical reversals in the methods of her self-culture did not occur only once is attested by the Mother's Prayer of October 7, 1913, about six months before her meeting with Sri Aurobindo:

"A new door has opened in my being and an immensity has appeared before me....

"All is changed, all is new; the old garbs have dropped and the new-born child half-opens its eyes to the light of the dawn."

And there are not a few subsequent Prayers depicting remarkable transitions and new conquests. The Mother's sadhana has followed strange curves of ascent and descent, for it has not been so much an individual as a collective sadhana for the conversion of the earth-consciousness and the supramental self-expression of God in man. It would, therefore, be a great mistake to try to assess and understand it by the usual criteria of the mystical life. Many of her experiences are a prism or a reflex of the experiences of the earth-soul, and by far the majority a mighty prelude and preparation and prognosis. Hers has been a consecrated life of collective conquests, and it is only when the curves of her work come full circle that the veil will be lifted from the true nature of her experiences and an illumined elite of humanity or superhumanity will be able to comprehend something of the significance of her ideal and mission. For the moment it remains an impenetrable mystery pregnant with incalculable possibilities for the future of humanity—a mystery, which repels the advances of the prying analytical reason, but welcomes faith into its sacred heart and vouchsafes to it a glimpse of its hidden secret.

Let us now proceed to a close and devoted study of the words written or spoken by the Mother before her meeting with Sri Aurobindo, and try to see how they are essentially identical with those of Sri Aurobindo. We shall study them under four heads: (1) The Divine Union, (2) Physical transformation through service in an integral surrender, (3) conquest of the Subconscient and the Inconscient, (4) The Divine Manifestation and Divine Life. It will be our humble endeavour in this study to follow the developing contours of the Mother's ideal and mission and relate them to those of Sri Aurobindo in order to substantiate our thesis that the meeting of the two identities from the two hemispheres of the world betokens the advent of the unity of mankind in the integral realisation and manifestation of the Divine in life.

(To be continued)

RISHABHCHAND

THE MEETING OF THE EAST AND THE WEST IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

(*Continued from the last issue*)

THE STANDPOINT OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY IS EXISTENTIAL AND THEORETICAL, INTELLECTUAL, DYNAMIC AND COSMIC

COMING now to what we may call the spirit of Western philosophy, how are we to characterise it? Our task undoubtedly is not an easy one, in view of the fact that Western philosophy has had a long history and has undergone radical changes in the course of centuries. On account of this difficulty one very learned and very versatile scholar—I mean Prof. Moore of the Hawaii University—has declared that there is no special feature in Western philosophy which distinguishes it from Oriental philosophy. As I have already said in the beginning, it is impossible for me to adopt this attitude. I believe that there is a great deal of truth in the famous saying of Fichte, namely, that what philosophy a man has depends upon what sort of man he is, so that unless we assume that all men all over the world are identical, there must be some differences in their temperaments and outlooks upon life, which are bound to be reflected in their philosophies. I therefore hold that we can speak of a spirit of Western philosophy which effectively distinguishes it from the spirit of Oriental philosophy. That spirit, I think, can best be discovered by noting the direction of evolution of Western thought. I have therefore to make an excursus into the history of Western philosophy which I propose to do on the same lines on which I made it in my Presidential Address already referred to, and using almost the same language.

The history of Western philosophy has been dominated by two main currents, which we may call respectively, Sophia or the knowledge of values, and Scientia, the knowledge of facts. The traditional founder of Western philosophy is Thales of Miletus, a slightly older contemporary

of the Buddha, who looked outwards, towards Nature, for discovering the ultimate principle of the universe, and found it in water. Western philosophy thus began in Greece with Scientia, with the knowledge of facts. Other members of his school, known as the Ionian philosophers, took some other natural principle as the ultimate principle of the universe. A change was brought about by Anaximander who took a more abstract principle, namely, the Boundless, as the starting-point of his philosophy. From now onwards Greek philosophy became more and more fond of abstractions. The process reached its climax in two philosophers, Parmenides and Heraclitus, who, although they differed fundamentally about the nature of the ultimate principle, one looking upon it as Being and the other as Becoming, yet agreed in making the ultimate principle as abstract as possible. This process of abstract speculation continued in Pythagoras, who looked upon Number, as the symbol of measure and proportion, as the ultimate principle. In Pythagoras Greek philosophy had also its first touch of mysticism, which it acquired partly from the Orphic cult and partly from its contact with Eastern, especially Indian philosophy, for there can be no doubt that Pythagoras was greatly influenced by Buddhism and other trends of Indian thought. After Pythagoras there was a return to the concrete standpoint of the Ionians, with this important difference that Greek philosophy had now become pluralistic, as contrasted with the monism of the early Ionians. In fact, in Empedocles, Anaxagoras and the Atomists, Greek philosophy was caught in a wave of pluralism. Anaxagoras, although he was essentially an atomist, yet introduced a principle fundamentally different from any that Greek philosophy had so far conceived and which was of far-reaching importance for the development of Greek philosophy. This was the principle of Nous or Mind which was unknown to Greek philosophy before him. But he could not make full use of this principle, and to the end it remained in his philosophy a *deus ex machina*, introduced for the purpose of explaining motion.

In fact, the credit of turning the centre of gravity of philosophy from Nature to Mind goes to Protagoras rather than to Anaxagoras. It was Protagoras who, with his doctrine *Man is the measure of all things*, made a revolutionary change in the outlook of Greek philosophy, which had hitherto been more or less a sort of natural speculation. By making man the centre of philosophical interest, he turned the gaze of philosophy from outside within. From now on, Greek philosophy became increasingly occupied with man and his problems.

But Protagoras had a very poor conception of the nature of man. Man for him meant only the sensuous man, that part of man which expresses itself only in sensations and perceptions. A second revolution in the conception of philosophy was therefore necessary, and this was led by Socrates. He pointed out that it was only the universal element in man which could be placed in the centre of philosophical interest. Philosophy thus became in the hands of Socrates the science of universal values as discovered by human reason. From now onwards Greek philosophy became really a philo-sophia, that is, love of Sophia or knowledge of values. Plato as the complete Socratic inherited this universalistic bias of his master, but he inherited along with it the mysticism of the Pythagoreans, and therefore, Sophia meant with him not only the knowledge of values as gained by the intellect but also that obtained through intuition. Now the highest principle of Plato, the idea of good, is not a pure principle of reason but is something which transcends reason. In fact, as I have pointed out in my paper *Sri Aurobindo and Plato*, his discovery of the idea of good through intuition led to a conflict in his philosophy between reason and intuition. Plato had an intuition of the idea of good as the ultimate principle and therefore he endowed it with the necessary dynamism to function as such. But his logic stood in his way. He had already made a divorce between the ultimate metaphysical realities and a Creator who is metaphysically a subordinate principle but is dynamically supreme. Hence the conflict between reason and intuition which Plato could not reconcile.

The successors of Plato maintained the standpoint of philosophy as Sophia set up by Socrates and Plato. Aristotle no doubt paid greater attention to facts than either of them, but in one sense he was even more true to the ideal of Sohpia than they, for he discovered even in facts an inherent teleology, which really meant that even facts were not mere facts but were also values. He was the first among Greek philosophers to introduce the idea of Evolution, based upon teleology, which in some respects anticipated the Hegelian conception of Evolution. Aristotle's successors, the Stoics, the Epicureans and the Sceptics, neglected the theoretical side of philosophy and concentrated their attention upon the practical side of it. This resulted in a complete divorce between facts and values, and philosophy became an aggressive science of values which showed a contempt for facts. This attitude was further accentuated in Plotinus who advocated a flight from the realm of facts to the domain of the Supreme Value, God.

Thus the characteristic note of Greek philosophy, when it was at the height of its glory, was Sophia or knowledge of values, although it began in the Milesian philosophers with a pure love of facts or Scientia. After the Greeks came the Romans. They had a totally different culture. They had hardly any philosophy of their own. They were imperialists bent upon extending their territories and subjugating different races and countries. They were therefore interested in developing such knowledge as helped them in their imperialistic designs. They were votaries, therefore, of Scientia rather than of Sophia, and the subjects to which they applied themselves were law and the science of government, the two sciences which were directly concerned with their imperialistic policies.

Imperialistic Rome thus clung to Scientia, and did not show much love for Sophia. So naturally we should have expected that with the dissolution of the Roman Empire there would be a revival of Sophia or the knowledge of values. But unfortunately, Imperialist Rome was succeeded by Imperialist Church, and the one was as destructive of the pursuit of values as the other. Under the rule of the Church both Scientia and Sophia suffered, for this rule was as destructive of the discovery of facts as it was of the pursuit of values.

Freedom from the imperialist legacy of Rome, therefore, only came after the decline of the power of the Church. This happened in the period known as the Renaissance. Its very name indicates clearly its essential characteristic. It was the period of the renaissance or revival of the Greek spirit. It gave therefore a tremendous push to the long-neglected pursuit of the knowledge of values. Hence we have again systems of philosophy, of which the keynote was the pursuit of values, of which the most important was that founded by Descartes and known as the Cartesian system. Descartes' "Cogito ergo sum" is man's discovery of his lost soul. This restoration to man of his lost consciousness of his self is a landmark in the cultural history of mankind. Descartes therefore may be said to have started a new epoch, and is consequently rightly called the father of modern philosophy. Unfortunately, Descartes, although he discovered for man his lost soul, could not let him remain long in it. His 'Cogito' was merely an external appendage of his system, and the only use to which he put it was to extract from it a criterion of truth, which he employed for proving the existence of God. This done, Descartes had no further need of the 'Cogito', and the rest of his system was a hopeless dualism of mind and body. This dualism he left as a legacy to his successors. Spinoza, the great-

est of these, escaped the Cartesian dualism through his mysticism, which was his Oriental heritage. It was, in fact his *scientia intuitiva* and his *intellectual love of God* which saved his philosophy from the quandary in which Descartes had left speculative thought. But still there was a sharp cleavage between the two parts of his philosophy—that which was under the influence of Descartes and that which he obtained as part of his Oriental heritage. It is for this reason that John Caird in his book on Spinoza (Blackwood's Philosophical Classics) says that "the last word of Spinoza's philosophy is a direct contradiction of the first." No doubt it is a contradiction, but through this contradiction emerges the greatness of Spinoza, for it shows that when it is a question of choosing between fidelity to logic and loyalty to the essential values, he has never hesitated to choose the latter. Indeed, the very title of his chief philosophical work, "Ethics", shows how he has subordinated the purely ontological problem of being to the axiological problem of value.

Spinoza thus recovered for philosophy its ancient predilection for values. But this recovery did not last long, for there arose soon after him the empirical school of John Locke which culminated in the scepticism of David Hume. Philosophy again lost its essential character and became a handmaid to science. It is true it partially recovered its lost position in Leibnitz, but Leibnitz's monadism, by overemphasizing the individual reduced the universal values to a position of comparative inanity.

From now onwards Western philosophy became the history of the conflict between two currents of thought, represented respectively, by love for facts and love for values. This conflict is going on even today. The important thing here is not which side has won in this conflict. Perhaps the truth is that no side has won any decisive victory over the other. We have, in fact, here realized Bergson's ideal, that is to say, we have put more philosophy into science and more science into philosophy. Those who say that the victory has been entirely on the side of science overlook the fact that science has felt very much the impact of philosophy, especially the idealistic philosophy of Germany of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The most important thing about this conflict is the need which is felt of a reorientation of philosophy, not only to meet the challenge of science, which, after all, is not a very great thing, but to re-establish human culture on a newer and sounder basis, that it may serve the needs of mankind better than the present civilization is doing. How the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo can help Western philosophy in this task, we shall presently show.

To return to our story of the adventures of Western philosophy: after Leibnitz came Kant. He answered the challenge of Hume, which was the challenge of science in those days, by showing that experience is not possible without an extra-experiential element, contributed by the mind, working in it, to which he gave the name *a priori*. He showed that Hume's philosophy was destructive not only of all metaphysics, but also of all science. For it was the common demand of both science and metaphysics that there should be order and system in the universe. But from the standpoint of pure experience there could be no order or system in the universe. The world, from this point of view would be a world of eternal flux, without any stability. On this point the Buddhists and Heraclitus had said the last word. Both science and philosophy gained very much by Kant's criticism of the standpoint of pure experience. Kant thus helped to place philosophy again on its old saddle by showing that even facts are facts because there are values working in them. But he gave a rude shock to philosophical consciousness when he declared that so far as knowledge was concerned, its value content was not in a position to give it access to the noumenal reality but only to the lower world of phenomenal reality. Indeed, it may be said of him that he gave with one hand what he took away with the other. It is true he gave to the moral life a status which he had not given to knowledge, but this was after all a poor consolation, for he made it clear that the values of moral life were not accessible to knowledge but could only be obtained by faith. And what was this faith? If faith meant with Kant a wider and richer consciousness than was possible in knowledge, one could have understood Kant's giving it a higher status. But faith in his philosophy was only another name for the purely analytical consciousness of the identity of self with self—a consciousness which, from the point of view of content, is on a lower level than knowledge. The only redeeming feature of Kant's limitation of knowledge to empirical reality was this, that as for Kant knowledge meant only such knowledge as could be obtained with the help of the logical categories, it was a good thing that he did not give it access to the Ultimate Reality, for there are higher values than logical categories. His real mistake lay, in fact, not in giving this knowledge a lower status, but in not recognizing any other knowledge than this. Why should it be supposed that this is the only knowledge vouchsafed to man? Kant, in fact, did great injustice to man in denying him any knowledge higher than this.

Hegel removed this defect of the Kantian philosophy and gave man unlimited possibilities of knowledge. He chalked out a gigantic scheme showing

how knowledge could ascend by successive steps from the lowest knowledge, the knowledge of Being, to the highest, the knowledge of the Absolute. The whole scheme was based upon the principle of Continuity, which for Hegel was the principle of Reason. Hegel thus built a ladder of perfect continuity between the highest and the lowest principles. In fact, it was the most perfect picture of continuity that the human intellect had ever conceived.

Unfortunately, it did not satisfy the human mind. As I put it in my Bombay Address, "Could it give peace and consolation to human consciousness athirst for values? The subsequent development of European thought after Hegel gives the answer to this question. There was an immediate revolt from the side of the consciousness of values against this philosophy of absolute continuity. This is known as the romantic revolt against the Hegelian rationalism. The leader of this romantic revolt was Schopenhauer. His motto was: Anything but this hated reason with its principle of continuity. He did not care what his own principle was to be. Let it be anything; only it must not be this confounded reason. For this reason he chose the blind will as his principle....With this principle as his weapon he began to deal hard blows at the Hegelian structure. Soon he gathered round him other rebels who joined him in destroying the Hegelian structure. The mighty Hegelian structure was shaken; there were breaches in its walls here and there, but it did not fall. And why did it not fall? Because, in spite of its seeming apathy towards values, it was more strongly entrenched in them than its rival systems. One good thing, however, came out of this attack by Schopenhauer and his fellow-romanticists. It showed the weak points of the Hegelian philosophy, judged from the standpoint of values. It revealed to the world that the principle of continuity with its apotheosis of continuity could not give a wholly satisfactory philosophy."

While all this civil war was going on in the land of philosophy proper between the advocates of reason and those of some other principle than reason which could satisfy better the human craving for values, the other side, namely, Science, did not remain a mere passive spectator. It had by this time acquired enormous prestige. It could show an unbroken record of achievement. It was no wonder, then, that it began to make inroads into the realm of philosophy. It created a new philosophy which we may call scientific philosophy, which tried to build a Weltanschauung on the foundation of physics and biology. The addition of a biological factor made

it very popular, and it quickly replaced the previous empirical philosophy of John Stuart Mill in popular favour. But the addition of a biological factor made it deviate from its previous attachment to purely mechanical principles. Especially the doctrine of evolution, which formed such an important feature of scientific philosophy of the nineteenth century, is a wide departure from the principles of a purely mechanical philosophy and brings scientific philosophy somewhat close to the current idealistic philosophy. Thus there has been established since the middle of the nineteenth century a sort of rapprochement between science and philosophy. The process has been hastened by the appearance of pragmatism, which with its double face, one turned towards empiricism and the other towards teleology, has played admirably the rôle of an intermediary between science and philosophy.

The position, therefore, of Western philosophy at the present moment is that owing to the excessive growth of the intellectualistic element in it, which romanticism could not subdue, it has become predominantly logical, and also on account of the influence of science it has become existential or factual. But it has been able to maintain throughout its dynamic character. Its outlook was never practical, except for a brief period in Greek philosophy, and in very recent years in pragmatism and some forms of the philosophy of values. So in remaining mainly theoretical, it has not deviated from its traditional standpoint. It has acquired a new tendency through its contact with the science of the latter part of the nineteenth century, which was characterised by a great development of the biological sciences. This is its evolutionary outlook. Of course it goes back to the days of Aristotle, but it was lost through the passage of centuries, till Hegel revived it in a new form and the scientific thought of the nineteenth century adopted it and handed it back again to philosophy. Evolutionary theories, therefore, are a very good example of the mutual interchange of ideas between science and philosophy. Be that as it may, the philosophical outlook today is distinctly evolutionary.

The main fight has been on the issue whether Reality is Existence or Reality is Value, the forces on either side being almost equally matched. On the whole, the advocates of Reality as Existence have proved stronger. This is conclusively proved by the fact that even philosophers of values, whose avowed object is to show that Value represents the ultimate nature of Reality, have accepted the view that Reality is Existence, and in order to maintain the difference of Value from Existence, have declared

Value to be unreal. Another contest has been on the issue whether Reality is to be approached through the intellect or reason or through some other channel either infra-rational, like feeling or the will, or supra-rational or spiritual, like intuition. Western philosophy has stood solidly by the intellect or reason, and even though in Greek philosophy the ultra-rational standpoint was put forward, as in Heraclitus, Pythagoras or Plato, the rational standpoint was never abandoned. It is only in recent years, since the romantic revolt against rationalism in the early nineteenth century, that a serious attempt has been made to challenge the rational standpoint but, as I have shown, the forces of romanticism have not been able to shake the rationalistic foundation of Western philosophy. The point on which there has been practically unanimity among Western thinkers is the cosmic outlook of philosophy. The West has had throughout a cosmic outlook in philosophy and never thought it was the business of philosophy to deal with the problems of individual salvation or individual happiness. This is mainly due to the fact that its interests have been chiefly theoretical and not practical. But even when it has dealt with practical problems, it has dealt with them from the cosmic, and not from the individual standpoint.

To conclude this fairly long historical account of the philosophical outlook of the West, I would say that its main characteristics are: (1) that it is theoretical, rather than practical, (2) that it is existential, rather than axiological, (3) that it is intellectual or rational, rather than spiritual, (4) that it is cosmic, rather than individualistic, and (5) that it believes in change and evolution, rather than in static constancy. As I have stated at the outset, I do not expect any general agreement, far less unanimity, on the question of the spirit of Eastern or Western philosophy, and what I have stated above must be taken as my personal view.

(*to continue*)

S. K. Maitra

THE DOCTRINE OF MAYA

(*Continued from the last issue*)

BUT even the concept of *anirvacaniyatva* is not quite free from ambiguity of meaning. According to one school of interpretation, the world is *anirvacaniya* in the sense that it is endowed with indefinable type of being intermediate between Brahman, the ultimate Reality, and the *sunya*, the absolute unreality, or the *tuccha*, the self-contradictory. Upon this interpretation, the world and also the principle of Maya which sustains the world are 'not existent' in the sense that they are not existent like Brahman,—they are not credited with that exalted reality which belongs to Brahman, possessed as they are of a lower and inferior type of being. And they are 'not non-existent' in the sense that they are not non-existent like the hare's horn or the barren mother. Had the world been non-existent like the hare's horn, it could not have been positively given to our immediate experience. So the world is superior to the wholly non-existent or the unmeaning self-contradictory, and at the same time inferior to the ultimately existent, with the result that it can be said to possess some intermediate indescribable type of existence. Now, this is an interpretation which seems untenable for some obvious reasons. The world as endowed with some sort of reality must be either connected or not connected with Brahman. If connected with Brahman, then the world must have been contained in potentia in Brahman from which it is derived or brought forth into actualisation. If not connected with Brahman in any way, the world must be independent of Brahman, and must enjoy whatever reality it has on its own account or on account of some creative principle which is self-existent and independent. In either one of these alternative cases, the undifferenced and undifferentiated unity of Brahman as conceived by the Mayavadin is jeopardised. In the latter case, that is, when the world is supposed not to be connected in any way with Brahman, there is no warrant for the attribution of only a lower type of being to the world. En-

tirely disconnected from the Absolute, the world or its creative principle must function as another Absolute, with the result that we are forced into an unmitigated dualism of two irreducible principles. The supporters of the Mayavada usually seek to escape between the horns of the above dilemma by declaring that it is absolutely meaningless to speak of any connection or non-connection between Brahman and the world, because from the standpoint of Brahman the world simply is not. It is pointed out that the above dilemma derives its force from a confusion of two distinct standpoints, the transcendental and the empirical. The world is existent only from the empirical standpoint, while from the transcendental standpoint, it is simply non-existent. But this way of escape is not open to those who take their stand upon the interpretation of *anirvacaniyatva* that we are now considering,—the interpretation, namely that the world has a type of being peculiar to itself, a mysterious sort of reality intermediate between the Supreme and the Void. So the dilemma stands and stares them in the face. It goes to discredit their interpretation of Mayavada. Their interpretation is also hardly supported by the analogy of the rope-snake illusion which is frequently cited by the Mayavadins in illustration of their doctrine of the unreality of the world. When the illusory experience is dissipated, it is clearly realised that the wrongly perceived snake is not endowed even with a lower degree of reality, and that it was absolutely unreal even during the duration of the illusory experience. So let us now turn to a more reasonable interpretation of the world as *anirvacaniya.*

Some say that the world is '*not existent*' not in the sense that it falls short of ultimate reality, but in the sense that it completely disappears when viewed from the standpoint of ultimate reality or Brahman. When the supreme Truth is realised, the world of phenomenal manifoldness vanishes like a dream, and becomes *tuccha* (utterly meaningless). But still the world cannot also be categorically declared to be *asat.* It is 'not asat,' not in the sense that it has a higher degree or measure of reality than the non-existent or the self-contradictory, but in the sense that even though non-existent it is somehow presented to our empirical consciousness. Even though the world is completely unreal, it is mysteriously objective in so far as it is given to the consciousness covered by the Ignorance,—it is an objective unreality (*bhāva-rupamithyā*). Precisely this much is sought to be expressed by saying that the world is real from the empirical standpoint and has *vyavahārika sattva,* and is unreal from the ultimate or transcendental standpoint, having thus no *pāramārthika sattva.* The adherents of the Mayavada very often confound

between these two distinct interpretations of the concept of '*anirvacaniya*', and seek to silence the critics now on the basis of this and now on the basis of that interpretation. The interpretation which we are now considering is to be found in Prof. K. C. Bhattacharya's *Studies in Vedantism* and in his article entitled 'The Doctrine of Maya' in the proceedings of the *First Indian Philosophical Congress*. His analysis of the rope-snake illusion in the above-mentioned article is indeed a masterly one. To a person who perceives a snake in the locus of a rope, the snake is real (sat) as a positive datum of his experience. He promptly and energetically reacts to a snake presented here and now, and not to an elsewhere and elsewhen snake either supernormally presented or inadequately represented in memory. Nor can he be said to respond to a phantom of his own subjective manufacture. At the next stage however, when the illusion is dispelled and the person directs the search-light of his critical reflection upon the illusory situation, he realises that the snake is a mere falsehood, albeit an objectively presented falsehood, which is cancelled for all the three periods of time. But then a serious question arises. If the snake be false, how could there be any real perception of it? It must be said that the person under illusion only appeared to perceive the snake due to some psychic distemper; he cannot have really perceived the false snake. The falsity of the snake involves the falsity of the perception of it. This is, however, at this stage, no more than a mere article of faith, an article of faith to which critical reflection lends its support. The falsity of perception of the snake can be no matter for vivid and direct realisation so long as the person remembers to have perceived the snake. Thus we get the following stages in the analysis of perceptual illusion. At the first stage, which is the stage of actual illusory experience, the snake is objectively presented as real. At the second stage, which marks the dissipation of the illusion the snake is mysterious a real-unreal sort of thing, an objective unreality, a no-fact which is somehow presented to experience. At the third stage it is realised that the snake as a no-fact could not have been so much as actually perceived. Faith therefore demands that even *ajnāna* or illusory perception is nothing at all.

Let us now proceed to apply the above analysis of the rope-snake illusion to a determination of the status of the external world. Just as the snake is real from the standpoint of the person under illusion, so also the world must be pronounced to be real from the standpoint of men who are entangled in the meshes of *saṁsāra* (worldly life) in consequence of their being in the grip of Maya. When the veil of Maya is lifted and the self-luminous Truth,

is directly cognised, the entire phantasmagoric show that the world is vanishes like mist before the rising sun. But even though the world is thus exposed in its utter unreality, the liberated soul cannot forthwith cut asunder all bonds of connection with it. Until the bodily frame or physical sheath drops away, and along with it the vital and the mental sheaths, the liberated soul remembers to have once perceived and accepted the world as real, and to have also identified himself with the *māyaic* vehicle, even though the whole world of plurality is now clearly realised to be unreal for all the three periods of time. Moreover, the external world still continues to be presented to his bodily consciousness, even though it ceases to deceive the liberated soul any more. It continues to be given as a fact, even though it is clearly realised to be in truth a no-fact, just as a stick continues to look bent in water even after one is convinced of its own uniform straightness, or just as a landscape continues to appear rushing in the opposite direction to a man in the moving train even after the illusion is seen through. Now this is the stage of Jivanmukti or attainment of liberation here and now while living. At this stage, the individual self realises his complete identity with or non-difference from Brahman which is pure undifferentiated consciousness, and perceives the objective flux to be utterly unreal. But since he is still attached to his body, the world continues to be presented to his bodily consciousness and is apprehended as an indescribable objective unreality, a positive no-fact (*bhāvarupa mithyā*). While to a man in bondage Maya is real as the fundamental stuff of all the multitudinous forms of experience, to the Jivanmukta Maya is revealed as an indescribable principle of creativity, as the mysterious Power of the Lord which has the capacity of presenting the unreal as real and of objectifying the pure non-existent. Nobody can deny the presence of a fundamental contradiction here, because the unreal can by no means be objectively presented as a positive datum of real experience. All perception of the unreal, including the Jivanmukta's open-eyed perception of it as well as the *baddhajiva's* (i.e. ordinary mortal's,) deceptive perception of it, must be pronounced to be only seemingly so called and to be in truth a no-perception. Such perception is always due to the operation of Maya, even though this operation of Maya has no deluding influence in the case of the Jivanmukta and in the case of Iswara. But Brahman is in no sense subject to the operation of Maya, neither as an unconscious victim like the ordinary mortal, nor as a conscious support like the liberated soul or the Divine Self. It has already been observed that from the standpoint of Brahman the world is eternally unreal. It may further be noted here that

in the ultimate context relating to Brahman, illumined perception of the world as unreal is as meaningless as illusory perception of the world as real. In that ultimate reference, perception of the world is as much a no-fact as the world itself. From the supreme standpoint of Brahman, Maya is simply *tuccha*, a mere nothing.

Is it then the implication of Mayavada that there is no substantial difference between the illusory experience such as is exemplified in the rope-snake or the oyster-silver, and the normal experience of the world? Does the phenomenal world share the same ontological status as that of the passing illusion? From the empirical or practical standpoint there is assuredly a vast difference between the two. While the illusory experience is private to the person under illusion, the waking experience of the world may be called public in as much as it is common to the entire human species. Then again, the illusory experience is extremely short-lived or transitory, while the experience of the world may be said to be relatively permanent and stable. The world endures for the individual throughout his whole life or through a very long series of successive lives until he attains liberation, and it endures for the race indefinitely through successive generations until the time of cosmic destruction (*mahāpralaya*), when the world of manifestation is withdrawn into an unmanifest causal condition. Moreover, the illusory experience is not amenable to the needs of our practical life; it is not only practically useless, but is also highly disturbing to the practical scheme. But our normal wakeful experience is by all tests pragmatically valid; it is valid so far as the human species goes, and it is valid for all the purposes of practical life. Finally, the world is sustained by Iswara-Consciousness, or is created by Maya which functions in close dependence upon Iswara; but the passing illusion is to be traced to some sort of mental twist in an individual person who has the power of correcting it in a moment. Whilst the world is conditioned by Maya or *mula-ajnāna* (Primary Ignorance), the illusion is conditioned by *tulā ajnāna* (secondary ignorance). But all this difference notwithstanding, it must be noted that, according to the *Saṁkarite*, the illusory and the phenomenal are alike equally and in the same sense unreal from the standpoint of pure consciousness which is the one ultimate reality. It would be wrong to suggest that the illusory and the phenomenal represent different degrees of approximation to Brahman, and are consequently endowed with different degrees of reality. *Saṁkara* does not believe in the Bradleian doctrine of degrees of truth and reality, because the undifferentiated Reality, namely Brahman, is, in his

judgment, free from all qualification or modification by the manifold, whether transformed or untransformed. *Tulā ajnāna* which is supposed to be responsible for the illusion is in essence the same as *mula ajnāna* which is responsible for the phenomenal order; the former is a limited manifestation in a particular spatio-temporal context of the latter which is beginningless. *Saṁkara's* view in the matter may most aptly be described as a theory of degrees of unreality. In the domain of unreality one is indeed justified in treating the illusory as far inferior to our normal experience of the world on grounds of the superior pragmatic value of the latter. But, in the ultimate reference, they are both equally unreal.

(to continue)

HARIDAS CHAUDHURY

The vital is too selfish to have any gratitude. The more it gets the more it demands and it takes everything as its right and every denial of what it wants as an injustice and an offence.

SRI AUROBINDO

REVIEWS

I

Memories of my Life and Times. Vol. II.
An Introduction to the Study of Hinduism. *By Bipin Chandra Pal.*
(Published by Messers Yugayatri Prakashak Limited. Calcutta.)

Bipin Chandra Pal needs no introduction, even though to the young man of today he is but a name. Still, having been in the fore-front of public life for five decades, during the most critical period of India's recent history, his name has never quite faded out of the memory of his countrymen.

In order to be able to appraise the two books under review, it is necessary for the reader to know the man and have some idea of the trend of his activities. We have known him fairly well during a great part of his life. During our college days in Calcutta, we used to be great admirers of his fiery eloquence in the meetings of the Chhatra Samaj, a non-political organisation of students guided principally by the late Mr. A. M. Bose. Bipin Babu was at his best when he declaimed against the evils of drinking and urged vigorously the cause of social reform. It was his temperance work which brought him to the notice of some English philanthropists and enabled him to secure a scholarship for theological studies in England. During his stay in that country, which partly coincided with our own, he made a name as a fluent speaker. We had the opportunity of hearing him speak in several meetings. He was very good indeed, when he held forth on social and religious topics, but in politics he attracted but little notice in gatherings that were used to the oratory of Lalmohan Ghose, Dadabhai Naoroji and Surendranath Banerji—not to speak of younger orators like Joseph Baptista (who became famous later on, as Baptista Kaka, the idol of the Bombay mill-hands). Bipin Chandra blossomed forth as a fiery advocate of political freedom after his return to India, when he began to address huge gatherings in his mother tongue. He developed an emotional rhetorical style of his

own, which has seldom been equalled. We heard him speak in Bengali, more than once, and saw how ably and cleverly he swayed his audience by his rich, powerful voice and impassioned gestures. What was lacking in depth was more than made up for by his fire.

Bipin Babu has given us several books in English on religion and politics and has written two volumes of his memoirs in the same language. They are all good, but none of them has reached the standard of his autobiography in Bengali—*Seventy Years*. His narrative style is excellent. Though it lacks wit and humour it is interesting and attractive enough. He has met so many eminent people and come into close contact with so many phases of Indian life that he can easily carry his reader with him. This is apparent even in his English memoirs, especially in chapters like "In the role of a Zamindar" and "With the Tribune in Lahore". The chapters on his Guru are eminently readable not only as a tribute of love and devotion, but also because they throw a great deal of light on the spiritual problems that stirred the mind of the Neo-Indian of that period. But all this was presented to us on a definitely higher literary level in the Bengali book, *Seventy Years*. There are generally two kinds of Memoir writers. The writer of the first kind is clearly egoistic himself holding the middle of the stage the whole time. The other occupies a seat in the body of the hall and watches the play unfolding itself on the stage. Pal is neither the one nor the other. He presents himself partly as an actor and partly as a looker-on occupying a seat in the front row of the stalls—which probably, is the truth. We shall come to his public life, later on.

Let us take in the meantime, his book on the study of Hinduism. In dealing with abstruse things, Pal's journalistic style and outlook have handicapped him to some extent. You cannot approach things spiritual in a light vein. You cannot really speak of the Spirit, except from a plane higher than that of the rational intellect. Likewise, it is futile your trying to set forth the universal Truth of things from behind a screen of sectarianism. All this is noticeable in this little book. Hinduism, if the word has any meaning at all, implies the eternal Religion, Religion that transcends time and space. It includes and is based on the conception of the four-fold goal of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha,—on the idea of the four Ashramas and the conception of the four Varnas. To miss this point of view is to miss the noblest aspect of the Sanatana Dharma,—the fact that it comprises all the paths that man has trod in his quest of the Highest. We are not suggesting that Bipin Babu did not realise this point; but in the book under review he

seems to be going round and round it with his subtle rational mind as his guide. It does no good today merely describing the Vedas as Pantheism or Henotheism, or the Upanishads as a monotheistic abstraction, in imitation of the Western scholars. We know now that the Vedic Rishi was a Truth-conscious seer and that the Upanishadic sage was anything but a world-shunning ascetic. On page V of the book under review appears this queer sentence summarising, as it were, Bipin Babu's view:—"This quasi spirituality of the Rigveda developed into what may be called a pure, though perhaps preponderatingly abstract, spirituality in the Upanishads." One wonders if these scholars have never read the famous Rik—"*Agnimile purohitam*"—of the Veda or the first two verses of the Isha Upanishad—"*Ishavasyamidam sarvam*" and "kurvanneveha karmani"! We are not prepared to accept such phrases as "Nature spiritualism of the Vedic thought" of Pal or his attribution of Monism to Upanishadic teaching. We are aware of a Monistic commentary of the Upanishad and we know what fruitless effort the commentator has had to make to establish that the sage of the Isha Upanishad decried the world and worldly action. Bipin Babu has sought to present to his reader "the evolution of Religion and its psychological processes". But he is far too much under the influence of prejudiced Western savants for his conclusions to be acceptable to the follower of the Integral path—to the student of Sri Aurobindo's luminous interpretation of the Sruti. His talk of the Nature-deities of the Veda coalescing later in the conception of the Brahman is more or less an echo of Maxmullerian thought. Such sentences as—"In the highest synthesis of monotheism, the conception of Hiranya Garbha contains social emphasis"—is, to say the least of it, obscure. Speaking of the gods, Bipin Babu has failed to bring their true import in Hindu religious thought, their position as embodied cosmic forces in creation. The author calls them symbols. Why symbols? Why not manifestation of the Divine in the universe? Indeed, the gods are neither allegorical nor metaphorical conceptions, but personalities actually existing on their own planes in creation. They can be friends of the human being in his quest of the spirit but they can not give him anything more valuable or more durable than their own thrones—in one word, Salokya. The Gita sums up this idea in the verse, "Those who worship the gods get them, those who are devoted to me get me." The parable in the Kena Upanishad also sums up the ancient Hindu conception of the Devas. The last verse of the Isha, taken out of the Vedas, is an invocation to the deity Agni, the Will of the Divine. There is no question there of symbols and

allegories. In fact, our old scriptures, read in the proper spirit, leave no doubt on the point.

It is not at all necessary to prolong this theme. Bipin Babu's true nature was not that of a cold-blooded reasoner in things spiritual. We have had the good fortune of knowing him as a Bhakta and have had the privilege of sitting with him in Kirtan assemblies several times. It was indeed thrilling to see him sitting entranced, tears flowing freely, as the singer chanted the lyrics of Chandidas or Vidyapati. That was, we venture to repeat Bipin Chandra's true vocation, his swadharma.[1]

An important part of Bipin Chandra's political activities before his second visit to England was his editorship of the weekly paper, *New India*. His writing therein was truly inspiring. He denounced in no measured turns the mendicant politics of the Congress of those days. Sri Aurobindo had already exposed the hollowness, the pretentions of that august body in the Indu Prakash some years previously. But as he had written anonymously and as he had at Mr. Ranade's request left his theme unfinished, it was forgotten by the public before the anti-partition agitation was launched. Bipin Babu also achieved considerable fame by his nationalist propaganda in South India. So when the daily *Bande Mataram* was started in Calcutta, he was naturally called upon to edit that paper. But this editorship did not last long, for he had shortly to make room for Aurobindo Babu, then newly arrived from Baroda. A few months afterwards when the latter was put up for trial on a sedition charge, Pal was called upon to give evidence against him—presumably to testify that Aurobindo Ghose was the editor of the Bande Mataram. Under legal advice, he refused to give evidence and was sentenced to Simple Imprisonment for six months. "Next year he practically exiled himself from home and country to escape a second term of imprisonment and spent the three or four following years in London."

[1] This we do not say in a spirit of "carping criticism", but just to point out the immense change time has wrought, the progress we have made in our national consciousness. Bipin Pal was indeed a power of the New Light and its stature was great in its own time and surroundings. He belonged to an epoch that has passed but great in its own way. When the Europeanised rational mind of India—especially of Bengal—turned towards the eternal heritage of our country and felt sincerely something of the breath of the spirit that is India, however inadequately, something of its light and power expressed itself in men of the epoch among whom Bipin Pal was a considerable figure. In an age of general ignorance, apathy and cowardice his voice rose for the absolute freedom of India, the full autonomy of Indian culture and civilisation. In him incarnated to a remarkable degree "the pride of the past, the pain of the present and the passion for the future"—in the golden words of Sri Aurobindo, describing the nature of a true lover of the country.

When Bipin Chandra came back to India in 1912, Aurobindo Babu had settled down to a spiritual life in Pondicherry and the whole political atmosphere in this country had calmed down considerably, but for sporadic outrages by terrorists. With these latter Bipin Babu had never had any connection. He adopted a generally peaceful political programme. In the language of his publishers, on his return "he threw himself once more into Nationalist agitation in India but with a distinct international outlook and emphasis." Mahatma Gandhi's noncooperation he stigmatised, later on, "as an attempt to take this country back to mediaevalism, from which the influx of new ideas through the British connection helped to bring it into modernism."

Bipin Babu was a man well above the ordinary. He was a forceful and eloquent speaker and writer, and in religion a devout Vaishnava. The two books under review amply testify to the width of his contacts and interests. It is a pity that he lost popularity with his countrymen towards the end of his life.

LATE C. C. DUTT

II

POEMS OF TO-DAY: Fourth Series. Published for the English Association by Macmillan and Co., Ltd.

The period between 1938 and 47 has been perhaps the most epoch-making in world-history and an anthology of verse written during these years cannot but mirror the deep anguish of sensitive souls over the crisis through which the present civilisation has been passing ever since the first world-war broke out. They say history is a story that has neither a beginning nor an end and yet if it ever had an end it was when the first world-war started and a beginning when the hostilities ceased. The map of the earth has changed past recognition after the second world-war but we must seek its causes in the deep spiritual excitement and soul-stirrings that were caused by this conflagration; for, the future will be moulded by the renovation of the inner sources of human thought and human values. Poetry being 'a great formative and illuminative power', as Sri Aurobindo says, is always an annunciator of the new-manifestation, of the future shape of things. This anthology seems to be fairly represen-

tative of the psychological convulsions experienced by the poets who witnessed the destructive forces that were unleashed during the last war. 'War is the father of all things', said Heraclitus in one of his most pregnant apophthegms. The Greek philosopher was a great truth-seer and here also he has not been blinded by the appalling destruction brought about by a war but seen in it a travail preceding the new-birth. There are visible in these poems the faint glimmers of a flame of aspiration which not only refuses to be put out by the converging darkness but even promises to break through it and eventually to manifest in its full effulgence the marvellous dawn that is building "its aura of magnificent hues" behind the opaque veil of night. The Oxford Book of Modern Verse begins with W. Pater's flights in the pure heavens of aesthetic pleasure over Leonardo's Mona Lisa. That was the spirit of the age which looked with disdain on all poetry which fell short of the pure aesthetic ideal. W.B.Yeats writes, "Pater offered instead of moral earnestness life lived as 'a pure gem-like flame' all accepted him for master". Poetry for him had nothing to do with life. It had neither to hold up a mirror unto life nor to become 'a criticism of life'. The poet could legitimately seek an escape from its din and blare into some 'Lake Isle of Innisfree'. That ideal was possible at that time because none could visualise a conflagration that might engulf the whole of the globe with its licking flames and threaten to reduce into ashes the whole structure of civilisation. Now, no escape is possible and humanity is left only with one choice: either to persist in its blind onrush driven by

'Its chequered eager motion of pursuit
Its fluttering-hued illusion of desire.[1]

and go under or to emerge into a nobler kind, 'beyond the sphere of the grey and the little' and

Make earth the home of the wonderful and life beatitude's kiss[2]

It is most significant that the present anthology has been launched on its course with a prayer and that too not for the 'daily bread' nor for the 'forgiveness of our transgressions' but for a peace that leans down

[1] *Savitri*—Sri Aurobindo
[2] *Rose of God*—Sri Aurobindo

from above and by its Light and Joy can stay 'their strife with a sleep not soon to be broken'. This poem seems exactly to fulfil the prophetic words that Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1914, "To-day we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality" (*The Life Divine*). The concluding lines of the poem express forcefully alike the poet's weariness of the noise and clatter of the factories, full of fret and fury signifying nothing and his clear vision of the power of the Divine Peace to conquer them by its luminous silence. He says:

> Sleep from a fairy tale, Lord, seizing factories in motion,
> Airplanes poised in the blue like dragonflies dormant,
> Rifles, bombs, tanks, cannon, warships, armies embattled conquered
> by silence
> When they awake O let them rub eyes of wonder,
> Stare with amaze at the countless engines of malice,
> Loose in their hearts a joy never known to destruction,
> Let them find wisdom.

At the end of the last war the Mother in her New Year's prayer said, "O Lord, we would have Thy peace and not a simulacrum of peace." There is a peace which comes when a lower passion of lust or hatred is satisfied but that is not peace but only a fuel feeding those hideous flames and when it is consumed those flames rise with greater fury. But there is the Divine Peace that comes when one is purified of this black mass and becomes a fit receptacle for the higher delight. This peace is wide and all-powerful and eternity is the stuff of which it is made and no circumstances or being can take it away: it is self-existent. It is a faint glimmer of this Peace that the poet Coleer Abbot seems to have caught. Sri Aurobindo in his poem 'The Ascent' has bodied it forth much more vividly and powerfully and we clearly mark the 'difference of receiving from above and living in the ambiance of the Above'.

> Love shall envelop thee endless and fathomless,
> Joy unimaginable, ecstasy illimitable,
> Knowledge omnipotent, Might omniscient,
> Light without darkness, Truth that is dateless.

Auden's elegy on the death of Yeats also reflects the same dual movemens of disgust over the present darkness encompassing Europe and the determination to plunge into it and sow the seeds of light in its tenebrout womb. He says:

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;
With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

The trochaic metre has lent to the verse a verve and inspired force that carries us on the surge of a spiritual vision.

But his poem 'Musée des Beaux Arts' will surely rank among the most enduring poems of the period. He has brought with its full power the technique of contrast and thus made the thing presented living to the imaginative vision.

Suffering shadows all life, but for the artists and poets its poignancy is augmented when it is seen against the background of the unconcern with which Nature pursues relentlessly its cyclic motion. Generations whole may sink, nations may go under and our grandiose works of centuries of hard labour may crumble down into dust and debris and yet the earth moves round the sun on its orbit quite unmoved. Not only material Nature but even human life also goes on except for a jolt at rare intervals unmindful of the agonies that beset others. Auden writes about suffering:

how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking
dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting

For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the end of the wood:

The minuteness of detail has turned into a concrete image what would else have been a mere philosophical musing. But in the succeeding lines the pathos has been made more telling and sharp over the crass indifference of the humdrum life of the rabble to even the death of the greatest martyrs. He says:

That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life...

It is interesting to note how the same vision has found its inspired utterance in Sri Aurobindo:

For Nature walks upon her mighty way
Unheeding when she breaks a soul, a life
Leaving her slain behind she travels on.
Man only marks and God's all-seeing eyes.[1]

The last line lifts to a spiritual vision and a profounder truth what otherwise would remain an emotional stagger in the face of the blind Inconscience which ultimately swallows up everything.

And then the beautiful lines about Icarus who tried to fly in the air on wings pasted with wax on his shoulders. In the mid-ocean the wax melted and the daring inventor fell into the sea. Auden writes:

In Brueghel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

[1] *Savitri*—Sri Aurobindo

The reference to Icarus reminds me of the absence from the anthology of Stephen Spender's poem on modern man.

> This aristocrat, superb of all instinct, with death close-limbed
> Had paced the enormous clouds, almost had won war on the sun;
> Till now, like Icarus mid-ocean-drowned,
> Hands, wings, are found.

George Barker's 'Allegory of the Adolescent and the Adult' is a beautiful poem and the last line is again an indication of the widening of the consciousness and its rising to a height from which the whole universe seems the creation of a blind energy which builds and destroys and seems to move on without choice and direction. He says:

> I look from my hill with the woods behind,
> And Time, a sea's chaos, below.

That is always the first experience when one rises above the swirl and eddies of ordinary human life shut up in the narrow boundaries of the ego. But still beyond is the secret of creation and rising there one sees that there is a meaning, a high destination, a goal towards which we are moving though strugglingly and tardily.

Bellerby has felt something of the transfiguring touch of light and grace and can see the truth behind Nature's seasonal cycles. He writes:

> But when, next March perhaps, sunlight the colour of frost
> Wavers through branches to honeycomb some flaking wall
> Changeless since autumn, that will be the utmost
> Hope realised: light's delicate miracle of grace
> Still wrought on the forsaken place.

'Light's delicate miracle' brings to my mind Sri Aurobindo's lines describing the Symbol Dawn:

> The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
> Persuaded the inert black quietude
> And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.[1]

[1] *Savitri*—Sri Aurobindo

Lawrence Binyon's 'The Burning of the Leaves' expresses the blazing fire of an aspiration which seeks to burn the past into ashes and to emerge phoenix like with a new-birth. The lines carry on their wings the drive and energy of the poet's faith in the future. But it is of good augury that some of the modern poets are beginning to touch higher and deeper planes of consciousness before whose immense stillness the whole bustle of life seems a mere froth. Francis Bellerby writes:

> Through all the roaring maniac din
> Outside, the shadowless stillness there within
> Held.

Again the same thing comes bathed in the luminous experience of the 'Indwelling Universal' in Sri Aurobindo. About the agonies and joys of the world he writes:

> Yet all its acts are only waves that pass
> Upon my surface; inly for ever still,
> Unborn I sit, timeless, intangible
> All things are shadows in my tranquil glass.
> My vast transcendence holds the cosmic whirl;
> I am hid in it as in the sea a pearl.

Bellerby writes:

> Now is the time for stripping the spirit bare,
> Time for the burning of days ended and done,
> Idle solace of things that have gone before
> Restless hopes and fruitless desire are there;
> Let them go to the fire, with never a look behind.
> The world that was ours is a world that is ours no more.

and at the end

> Nothing is certain, only the certain spring.

Lilian Bowes Lyon's 'Save our Souls' is not only the ardent supplication of a sincere spiritual aspirant but of one who seems to be truly grappling with the forces of the nether world. The poem opens with these lines:

Let down, let down, down, down,
To sightless deeps, your tenuous ropes.
Our anguish has a hand, that gropes
For melody, for the light-song of the sun.

And ends with

Let down, let down, down, down
Your timely ropes, to faithful deeps.

The anthology, though compiled with a view to meeting the needs of young school boys, contains some of the profoundest poems and the recurrence of the mystical note again and again seems to be the harbinger of a new dawn of poetry whose clarion call has already begun to send its reverberations throughout the world. We hope that the fifth series will freely cull poems written by Indian singers of the glories of 'The Life Divine'.

R. N. KHANNA

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